

Hafa Adai!

Rota postmaster revels in island life; working with 'happy people.' **PAGE 2**
DFEMS found noncompliant with CNMI public law. **PAGE 3**

\$1

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Torres

'We aren't running away, we aren't avoiding this'

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

The defense counsel for three govern-

ment officials who were recently sued by the CNMI attorney general for alleged illegal Super Typhoon Yutu compensation says that his clients

are looking forward to their day in court and are not running away from the matter.

Attorney Robert Torres, who rep-

resents former Finance secretary Larissa Larson, former Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Ser-

See **RUNNING** on **Page 4**

MISAPPROPRIATION, ABUSE, WASTE OF PUBLIC FUNDS BLAMED

'Unprecedented financial crisis'



Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang hold a news briefing in the Office of the Governor's conference room yesterday afternoon. Also in the photo are some lawmakers, acting Department of Finance secretary Tracy B. Norita, next to Apatang, and Office of Management and Budget acting special assistant Virginia C. Villagomez, third from left.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

» **Group formed to review, reconcile gov't financial records**

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang said yesterday that the misappropriation, abuse, and waste of public funds by the Torres administration have led to an unprecedented government financial crisis that will have a multi-year impact on the CNMI.

See **CRISIS** on **Page 4**

Lunar New Year rush starts in China after virus rules lifted

BEIJING (AP)—Hairdresser Wang Lidan is making an emotional Lunar New Year journey from Beijing to her hometown in northeastern China—her first in three years after the government lifted

See **LUNAR** on **Page 4**



Travelers ride escalators at Beijing West Railway Station in Beijing, Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2023.

AP

WITH GOV'T FINANCES IN DISARRAY, Palacios seeks DOI's Cantor's aid

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Stating that they have discovered that the CNMI government's finances are in considerable disarray, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios has sought the help

of Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor to identify any measures of support and technical assistance her office and the U.S. Department of the Interior may be able to provide the CNMI.

In a letter Friday to Cantor, Palacios said they are assessing the government's financial situation with a commitment and dedication to restore best practices in the budget execution and financial management system.



Palacios



Cantor

"It appears, however, that we may lack the immediate

See **PALACIOS** on **Page 4**

INSIDE



BUSINESS

Pink Petals Beauty Salon has opened in Garapan to cater to the beauty needs of the public.

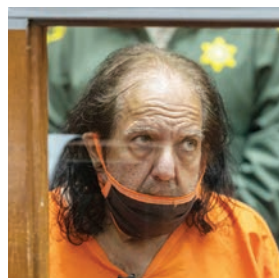
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ASIA

Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa and Rappler are cleared of tax evasion charges.

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LIFE & STYLE

Porn performer Ron Jeremy is found mentally incompetent to stand trial on rape charges.

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Local

Rota postmaster revels in island life; working with ‘happy people’

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Tina Ramirez, who was nearing retirement from the U.S. Postal Service in 2019, wanted to go on an adventure, so she packed her bags, left her home in Kansas City, Missouri without her family, and traveled 7,110 miles to reach her destination—Rota, a tropical island where she loves to stay and enjoys

» **‘USPS serves as a lifeline between Rota residents and outside world’**

working as its USPS Rota postmaster.

“I love Rota and its people for so many reasons. Everyone is so friendly and helpful and there is no crime and no stress,” Ramirez said.

Ramirez, who provided her statement to *Saipan Tribune* through Duke Gonzales, who is the U.S. Postal Service’s corporate communications representative for USPS Hawaii and Pacific Island facilities, pointed out that because the island is such a small community, people are dependent on each other, which makes it a peaceful place to live.

She said the post office is

vital to this community because Rota is so small and their customers can’t simply drive to another community to obtain things. Ramirez said USPS serves as a lifeline between Rota residents and the outside world.

“This is definitely the best job in the postal service! I get to spend 40 hours a week with happy people,” she said.

Born in Germany to U.S. Army parents, Ramirez’s



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Rota Postmaster Tina Ramirez hands over a parcel to customer Ben “Guelu” Rosario. Ramirez moved from Kansas City, Missouri to Rota where she has been working as a postmaster since 2019.

family moved to Kansas City when she was just 4 years old. She began her USPS career in 1995 as a rural carrier associate.

Ramirez recalled that she was nearing retirement in 2019 when she saw the postmaster position in Rota pop up, so she Googled it to find out where it was, since she had no clue about the island. When she saw that it was a tropical island, she told herself that that would be her next job.

Ramirez said her husband, children, and grandchildren still reside in the Kansas City area.

“My husband of 22 years didn’t come with me to Rota because we have a business that he runs in Mission, Kansas,” she said.

The things that Ramirez miss the most about Kansas City are her family and friends. She also misses being able to go shopping.

On a recent trip back to Kansas City, she walked into a Costco warehouse store and was amazed at the num-

ber of choices and how much was there.

“If you want ketchup here [on] Rota, there’s only one brand to choose from,” she pointed out.

Ramirez also misses the entertainment options in Kansas City. On Rota, they don’t have a movie theater, bars, and even a bowling alley. But Rota does have some great fishing and diving options and some fishing derbies and great cultural festivals. She said Rota is filled with amazing places to discover nature.

Ramirez lives a block away from the Rota Post Office, so she does not have a car. “But if I want to go to anywhere, someone will either take me or loan me a vehicle to drive,” she said.

Even though she rarely cooks, Ramirez said she eats extremely well, thanks to the generosity of her neighbors.

“One thing they’ve taught me is a hundred different ways to use the various parts of a coconut,” she said.

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DFEMS found noncompliant with CNMI public law

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

The transition team assigned to look into the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services has found that the department has been noncompliant

with CNMI law for numerous reasons.

According to the transition report, prepared under the leadership of acting Fire chief Jesse Mesa, it said that DFEMS has been noncompliant with Public Law 18-73

or the "Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services Act."

One of the team's findings of noncompliance was the Fire commissioner's salary and the certification requirements needed to become the Fire chief.

The report states that the law requires the Fire commissioner position to have a salary of no less than and not to exceed \$54,000 per annum, while deputy Fire commissioners for the islands of Rota and Tinian and each of the five divisions within Saipan's DFEMS—which are appointee positions—should each have a salary of no less than and not exceed \$42,000 per annum.

It said the law also requires compliance with National Fire Protection Association standards such as NFPA 1710, Standards for Fire Operations and NFPA 1000 series for firefighter certifications (National Professional Qualifications aka the Pro Board (NPQS) or the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress and the National Registry Emergency Medical Technician.

The transition team also found that the department has been working its firefighters 10 hours over the legal num-

ber of hours per pay period, as stated in Public Law 18-73.

"Numerous Fire personnel within the firefighting ranks are assigned in all divisions and all are working a 116-hour schedule. Public Law 18-73 states all firefighters shall work 24-hour shifts of up to 106 hours per pay period. The transition team requested justification for the 116-hour schedule for all Fire personnel regardless of duty assignment. The acting commissioner initiated the directive for work-

ing 116 hours per pay period regardless of what division the fire personnel are assigned to," said the report.

The team recommended that Gov. Arnold I. Palacios reassess the legality of the directive issued by the acting fire chief and if such a drastic change requires the law to be amended or the issuance of a governor's executive order.

The report went on to state that majority of the department's morale is low.

"A survey was conducted

[among] approximately 70 Fire personnel regarding leadership, morale, and welfare. Majority of the department morale is very low. Majority of the submittals complained about poor leadership and poor communication, from the leadership down to the low-ranking file. Some of the concerns are from personnel being promoted or re-assigned to another division and still working and getting paid 116 hours," said the report.

CUC ADVISORIES

Power service interruption on Monday

There will be a scheduled power service interruption on Monday, Jan. 23, 2023, as the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. continues its ongoing system maintenance.

■ Time: 8:30am to 2:30pm

■ Area(s) affected: HANMI Hardware in Garapan.

Momentary Power Service Interruption

■ Time: 8:30am to 9am and 2pm to 2:30pm

■ Area(s) affected: Garapan and Upper MIHA Housing.

■ Traffic lights affected: China Town Traffic Light.

■ Purpose: To relocate existing concrete pole and primary lines in front of Sugar King Park.

■ Water well(s) affected: None

■ Wastewater facility affected: Wastewater bypass

will be monitored, however, no areas affected. (PR)

Water interruptions in San Roque, Achugao, Tanapag

There will be a series of scheduled water service interruptions in San Roque, Achugao and Tanapag on Jan. 21, 28, and Feb. 4, from 8am to 5pm. Commonwealth Utilities Corp. customers in the affected areas may experience low water pressure to no water during the interruption period.

These will allow CUC's contractor to cut and cap the parallel lines connected to the 6-inch pipes and to relocate the PVC pipes and install 6-inch gate valves along Chalan Pale Arnold Road in Lower Base to San Roque.

In addition, CUC water operators will be repairing a damaged 12-inch mainline leak on Chalan Pale fronting Aqua Resort Club in San Roque. (PR)



NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Newly promoted 1st Sgt. Ivan Castro of the Guam National Guard's 94th Civil Support Team is promoted by Maj. Gen. Esther Agui in Barrigada on Jan. 18. Castro assumes responsibility for the 94th Civil Support Team from outgoing 1st Sgt. Anthony Cruz. Castro thanks his wife for her support of his career and "for holding it together for the kids and [me]. You always put us before anything else."

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LUNAR

From Page 1

its strict “zero-COVID” policy that kept millions of people at home and sparked protests.

The relaxation of restrictions let loose a wave of pent-up travel desire, particularly around China’s most important time for family gatherings. Referred to in China as the Spring Festival, it may be the only time of the year when urban workers return to their hometowns.

The Chinese government expects over 2.1 billion journeys to be made during a 40-day travel period around New Year’s Day, which falls on Sunday.

“The restrictions are lifted, which made me relaxed. So I think it’s time to go home,” Wang said before heading into Beijing Train Station for a trip to Heilongjiang province.

In December, China abruptly dropped near-daily coronavirus testing and QR code monitoring of residents after public frustration boiled over into protests in Shanghai and

other cities. This month, it dropped most remaining restrictions, including the demand that travelers from overseas must go into lengthy and expensive quarantine.

Many local governments had also imposed their own quarantine on travelers from outside the area, and it was those that Wang said had deterred her from leaving Beijing.

“If there was an outbreak in Beijing, I would have to be quarantined in my hometown. And when I came back to Beijing, I would be quarantined again,” she said.

CRISIS

From Page 1

Appearing at a news briefing in the Office of the Governor, Palacios said the financial crisis will also potentially impact the CNMI government’s ability to receive future federal funds or retain the trust of federal grantor agencies.

“I have not seen in all my years this level of misappropriation, misuse, and abuse of public funds in the history of the Commonwealth,” he said in discussing the CNMI’s state of fiscal affairs and the steps the administration is taking to address the matter.

Palacios disclosed that they have formed a Finance and Budget Strategy Group composed of representatives from the Department of Finance, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Legislature that is helping lead the comprehensive review of financial records, reconciliation, and identification of containment measures that will be implemented to sustain government operations.

Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang said they have been working on these issues for days; sometimes they don’t even have lunch in trying to put these things together so they can validate everything.

“Again, this is not a final,” Apatang said, adding that they are still continuing to look into government finances.

“Until we come up with the actual figures and all of that, we’re still working with the [Office of Management and] Budget and [Department of] Finance and our team, and the Legislature, so we’ll be informing you as to what’s going on,” he said.

Among lawmakers who attended the news briefing at Palacios’ invitation were Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) and House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan).

Palacios disclosed they met yesterday with the Office of the Public Auditor, where they submitted their transition reports for them to look at and validate. “And if necessary, make the recommendations whether to the Legislature or to the attorney general, or to myself,” he added.

Palacios said he also submitted the transition reports to the Office of the Attorney General.

Palacios said he does not want to create chaos in the community, but that they will work hard to get the Commonwealth out of this situation

and to keep the government running.

Only two years ago or a year and a half ago, the Commonwealth was in a much better position, Palacios said, because of the federal government’s assistance to all states and U.S. territories due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Palacios said they are not only looking at the expenditures but also the cost-cutting measures that are going to be implemented under these circumstances.

Palacios said the news briefing was supposed to be held late last week, but they postponed it until yesterday as they needed to do more work. He said they’ve finally got the transition reports and they will be compiling the complete report and make it available to everyone in the media.

Since the first revelation of the dire financial strait that the Commonwealth government is in today, Palacios said that nothing much has changed.

“Nothing has changed from last week. We are trying our very best,” he said.

Palacios was referring to the 2022 transition report on the Department of Finance in which a preliminary reconciliation has determined that the CNMI received \$481.8 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds, but as of Dec. 27, 2022, it has overspent and has a deficit of \$86 million.

ARPA was used to fund disaster-related expenditures pending reimbursements amounting to approximately \$48.7 million. Upon reimbursements, the ARPA deficit will be reduced to \$37.4 million, the transition report states.

Palacios stated at the press briefing that the Legislature is also involved to validate the points that were raised in the transition teams’ reports, especially in the financials.

“The numbers are kind of a moving target right now. But let us be clear about this. We’re still in dire straits. That number is not going to change significantly to a point where we can say that we can save jobs or programs,” Palacios pointed out.

The governor said that spending levels this past year have exceeded sustainable levels and, if not curbed and corrected, will threaten the efficient and effective delivery of public services.

Palacios noted that their team is actively and continuously working to assess and measure how extensive and deep is the financial hole the CNMI finds itself in.

He noted that the fiscal year 2020 audit is still in the final stages of being completed, the FY 2021 audit process has not begun, and the FY

2022 audit process still needs to be commenced.

He said the records and information that have been provided by the previous administration to transition teams are still being validated.

Palacios said the migration of financial data into the Munis system needs to be completed so that it can generate accurate and reliable reports.

He said the blueprint to economic recovery is not without hardship and financial sacrifices.

“But we have faced other daunting challenges before as a Commonwealth and we are working diligently to place the Commonwealth back on a sustainable, realistic path to economic recovery,” Palacios said.

He said the administration is also seeking assistance, support, and cooperation from all levels of government, including federal agencies, like the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The governor said the administration will also be reaching out to grantor agencies and, in fact, has already reached out to certain agencies, and is working with federal and local regulatory agencies so that infrastructure projects can move forward at full speed.

“This injection of infrastructure funds will help bolster and stimulate economic activity,” he said.

Although cost-cutting measures are inevitable, Palacios said they are looking at all areas of expenditures like nonfederal travel, vehicle leases, purchase contracts, and other areas.

“We will prioritize the immediate implementation of those that have minimal disruption to peoples’ lives and livelihoods,” he said.

The governor said they want to emphasize that those responsible for any inappropriate, illegal, and unethical activities—especially those with management authority over public funds—will be held accountable.

Palacios said they want to emphasize that rebuilding trust in the government cannot be done without being transparent about the CNMI’s situation and the challenges that lie ahead.

“That is why we will continue to update the people about their government, their public funds, and the CNMI’s fiscal state of affairs as we continue to learn more from audits, from in-depth analyses of financial records currently being conducted throughout the CNMI government, and from other ongoing activities that will shed even more light on our finances,” he said.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

“I would miss the Spring Festival and delay my return to work if I was quarantined twice. So inconvenient!”

Hu Jinyuan, from the eastern province of Shandong, had managed to return home each year despite the hassles. He says he plans to continue with regular COVID-19 testing and other safety measures as infections surged and patients flooded hospitals following the lifting of restrictions.

“I do nucleic acid tests every now and then. When I arrive in my hometown, I will surely do a test as a way of self-protection. Otherwise I won’t know if I’m infected. If I’m infected, I will just isolate myself at home,” Hu said.

Wang Jingli said he decided to work through the holidays since his company would triple his overtime pay. With the COVID-19 restrictions

canceled, his children and wife will visit him in Beijing from their hometown in Henan province.

“With the reopening, everyone is very happy about the Spring Festival because we can reunite with our families. But because of my work, I would spend my Spring Festival here in Beijing.”

While Lunar New Year has also become a popular time to travel overseas, airlines are still only gradually restarting international flights and government departments are just beginning to issue or renew travel documents.

Many countries have imposed testing requirements on travelers from China that the Foreign Ministry has protested, and worries remain about the spread of the virus in China since containment measures were lifted.

PALACIOS

From Page 1

audit and accountability capacities to put our fiscal house in order in as timely a manner as would serve and protect the best interests of our people,” he said.

As this developed, Harry C. Blanco, Office of Insular Affairs field representative in the CNMI, hand-carried yesterday afternoon Cantor’s response letter to Palacios, who at the time was holding a press conference with Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang in the Office of the Governor conference room.

Blanco said that Cantor will be coming to Saipan on Jan. 23 to, among other things, congratulate Palacios and Apatang.

Palacios told Cantor in his letter that consistent with the historic relationship between the government

and people of the CNMI and DOI, he urgently requests consultations to disclose the extent and scope of the challenges they face.

To begin efforts to mitigate any fiscal management deficiencies that might impact the economic well-being of the CNMI government and people, Palacios is requesting that plans for Cantor’s return on a second visit to the CNMI—if not prevented by other pressing demands—be finalized and confirmed.

He said this is important so they can have the earliest possible face-to-face discussion on the CNMI government’s financial conditions.

“Respectfully, we are deeply grateful that you have expressed an interest in coming back for an official visit to address federal and local matters with our government and spend time in our community,” Palacios told Cantor.

RUNNING

From Page 1

vices commissioner Claudio Norita, and former Department of Lands and Natural Resources secretary Anthony Benavente, insists that his clients are not avoiding nor running away from the lawsuit filed by AG Edward Manibusan.

“We’re not running away; we’re not avoiding this. We’re looking forward to it. We have a status conference on Feb. 8, and we’ll see where we’re at by then,” he said.

Although yesterday was the first initial hearing on the illegal overtime lawsuit before Superior Court Presiding Judge Roberto Naraja, none of the defendants were physically present.

Speaking on the matter, Torres said he hopes that throughout these court proceedings, he wants to continue to remind the prosecution of equal responsibility and equal accountability.

“Let’s not forget to also look at the other side of accountability and let’s ensure there’s transparency, accountability, and responsibility of this. We obviously believe that the genesis of this did not emanate from anyone of [my clients]. The concept or proposal was from the Office of the Governor and, I guess, vetted through various departments before it went through,”

Torres said.

“While we believe administration of this matter could have been done better, each of my clients will respond and attend to this matter. This means we’re looking at the complaints and, if the issue and the case is about accountability, then let’s have accountability on both sides of the aisle and my clients will attest to accountability for themselves,” the lawyer added.

During yesterday’s hearing, it was stated that, of the handful of former government officials who have been sued for illegal Typhoon Yutu compensation, only Larson, Norita, and Benavente appeared, as others have officially resolved the matter out of court or have yet to be served.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, Torres administration Cabinet members are facing similar lawsuits alleging illegal overtime compensation for overtime hours posted for Super Typhoon Yutu work.

Besides Larson, Norita, and Benavente, the other defendants include former Department of Community and Cultural Affairs secretary Robert Hunter, former Department of Public Works secretary James Ada, former Department of Labor secretary Vicky Benavente, and former Department of Public Safety chief Robert Guerrero. The OAG has already dropped the case against Vicky Benavente.

NMC Health Night tonight

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Start the year happy and healthy and make your way to the first "Northern Marianas College Health Night" tonight, Thursday, Jan. 19 from 4pm to 7pm at the NMC Mango Terrace.

The NMC Health Squad and CNMI Small Business Development Center Network are hosting this event and will highlight small businesses, community partners, and programs with a focus on healthy lifestyles.

Information booths will include the H.A.F.A. Initiative Diabetes Prevention Lifestyle Change Program, CHCC Community Guidance Center's System of Care & Healthy Transitions, Marianas Health Services, Paradise Dental Spa, Pickleball CNMI, Latte Built 24-Hour Gym, and Gold's Gym.

Along with the information booths, there will be fun and healthy activities starting at 4:30pm like tai chi with Barry Wicksman and 5:30pm



Deleon Guerrero

Zumba with Joe Caranto.

Patrons will also enjoy free health screening service courtesy of the NMC Nursing Club and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program Healthy Recipe Tasting.

"The SBDC recognizes the importance of prioritizing health and maintaining balance between work and home life while exercising self-care. The partnership between NMC and SBDC will always be a priority for our center as we look to strengthen ties between our network and our host institution by finding ways to offer services to our community while providing an avenue for our clients to showcase their services and products. We're always proud to fea-

ture what our clients have to offer our community through hosting regular SBDC nights. We look forward to

hosting more this year as the SBDC continues to build its clientele," said Nadine C. Deleon Guerrero, SBDC net-

work director.

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<p>2016 HYUNDAI ELANTRA STK: 16P433</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$14,995</p>	<p>2017 TOYOTA COROLLA LE STK: 17P370</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$16,995</p>	<p>2017 MITSUBISHI LANCER STK: 17P496</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$19,995</p>
<p>2016 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT • STK: 16P421</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$15,995</p>	<p>2017 MAZDA MAZDA6 SPORT • STK: 17P341</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$16,995</p>	<p>2016 TOYOTA SCION IM STK: 22H009A</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$19,995</p>
<p>2018 HYUNDAI KONA SE SPORT • STK: 21H047A</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$15,995</p>	<p>2017 MAZDA MAZDA6 SPORT • STK: 17P400</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$17,995</p>	<p>2017 FORD MUSTANG CONVERTIBLE • STK: 17HS1036</p> <p>SALE PRICE</p> <p>\$19,995</p>

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Amata: Share details of Palau, RMI MOU with Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Coleman Radewagen (R-AS) has expressed pleasure that U.S. negotiators last week reached an initial understanding with the governments of the republics of Palau and the Marshall Islands on general financial terms to extend the Compacts of Free Association for the next 20 years.

"Importantly," said Amata, who is co-chairman of the Congressional Pacific Islands Caucus, "these MOUs are not final commitments, but instead are milestones marking forward movement, in order to sustain momentum in negotiations that were on diplomatic life-support a year ago. Along with my colleagues in Congress, there will be many questions I will have about what to expect as terms are worked out leading to final agreements."

Noting that the MOUs will provide Congress with a window into the understandings reached that will inform the work Congress will need to do between now and October, when the financial provisions of the Compacts are set to expire, Amata went on to say that, "if the [Biden-Harris] administration expects the Compact renewal package to be approved by that time, I would urge the State Department to provide the MOUs to the leadership of the committees with jurisdiction over Compact affairs without further delay."

The conclusion of these preliminary agreements comes at a time when Amata recently met with the presidents and key leaders of the three Freely Associated States in connec-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Coleman Radewagen (R-AS) meets with Republic of the Marshall Islands President David Kabua.

tion with her travel to the region for the inauguration of new Northern Marianas Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, representing the House Natural Resources Committee at the request of incoming chairman Rep. Bruce Westerman. With a large expatriate Marshallese community in an Arkansas congressional district adjacent to his, he brings a familiarity with Micronesia to his new position.

Following the Palacios inauguration, where she had a chance to visit with Republic of Palau President Surangel Whipps, Jr. and Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, Amata returned to the U.S. mainland on United Airlines "Island Hopper" in order to visit with Chuuk Gov. Alexander Nar-

ruhn, FSM President David Panuelo and RMI President David Kabua, along with other senior government leaders on their home islands. "It was important for me to gain a perspective from these leaders that I could take back to Washington," said the American Samoa delegate, who last week also was named co-chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus. "I welcomed the chance to visit with FAS heads of state and their negotiators, who provided updates on the Compacts, and was pleased to learn of their satisfaction with Ambassador Joseph Yun."

"The reports I was hearing about recent progress in the Compact negotiations were most encouraging, and consis-

tent with the steady improvement we have been monitoring in these crucially strategic negotiations," she said. "There has been a long overdue trend in more productive negotiations since all parties moved off previous positions and began to resolve issues that had impeded agreement on core issues over the past three years."

"As I had hoped," continued the Samoan lawmaker, "recent consultations produced general understandings of the goals and intentions of the parties regarding the range of funding levels which, if approved by Congress and ratified by the FAS national legislatures, would sustain the success of the free association alliance. I welcome the Los Angeles MOUs as a sign of the progress that can be made."

"The FSM is completing its internal deliberations on the same issues addressed in the MOUs with RMI and Palau, and I was pleased to receive a detailed briefing on outstanding issues from FSM chief negotiator Leo Falcam, Jr. during my stop in Pohnpei. I understand the U.S. and FSM are making steady progress as well, so Congress can work on all three Compact renewal agreements in the critical months ahead."

"The more open communication there is about Compact renewal between the Administration and Congress now, the more productive the oversight hearing can be on the President's budget and legislative proposals to implement the Compact renewal agreements that need to be expedited in order to take effect before expi-

ration of current core Compact provisions that sustain our strategic alliance at the end of this fiscal year."

Consistent with the Department of the Interior's shared role with State Department in managing Compact funding as well as serving as the U.S. government's policy focal

point for U.S. flag territories, Amata was happy that Interior Assistant Secretary Carmen Cantor was present for the signing ceremony with Yun, RMI Foreign Minister and chief negotiator Kitlang Kabua and Palau Foreign Minister and chief negotiator Kaleb Udui. (PR)

Saipan Community School 2022/2023 Q2 Honors List

PRINCIPAL'S LIST

4.00 (No grade below "A")
Jihan Delos Reyes-4th grade
Iyani Muna-4th grade
Keaven Punzalan-4th grade
Byul An-8th grade
Jeong Bin Park-8th grade
Joshua Yoo-8th grade

Daniel Nae-7th grade
Ji Hun Park-7th grade
Emma Sablan-7th grade
Jose Sablan-7th grade
Annabella Tudela-7th grade
Hannah Chae-8th grade
David Park-8th grade
Eugene So-8th grade
Joan Song-8th grade
David Ye-8th grade

"A" HONOR ROLL

3.50 to 3.99 (No grades below a "B")
Dennis Guo-4th grade
Seung Ju Lee-4th grade
Joshua McDonald-4th grade
Olivia Um-4th grade
Wilson Guo-5th grade
Claire Oh-5th grade
Hiyori Okuma-5th grade
Micaela Tenorio-5th grade
Vivian Chung-6th grade
Elijah Pangelinan-6th grade
Tony Xiao-6th grade
Ian Chae-7th grade
Elin Kim-7th grade
Patrick McDonald-7th grade

"B" HONOR ROLL

3.00 to 3.49 (No grades below a "C")
Daniel Guo-4th grade
Bailey Parsons-4th grade
Alexander Diaz-5th grade
Lily Lim-5th grade
Ryan Macaranas-5th grade
Vanna Alvarez-6th grade
Caden Dame-6th grade
Nicole Williams-6th grade
Jin Choi-7th grade
Erine So-7th grade
Landon Springer-7th grade
Richard Zhao-7th grade
Ma'Ase De'Oro-8th grade
Morgan Finco-8th grade
Jack Li-8th grade
Sharon Zhang-8th grade (PR)

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Youth Congress session is postponed

The 1st Day, 11th Regular Session of the 18th CNMI Youth Congress scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 21, 2022, has been postponed and moved to Saturday, Jan. 28, 2023, at 11am in the House of Representatives chamber.

SHEFA reminders

The Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance program, or SHEFA, is reminding all interested applicants—new, ongoing, and

returning beneficiaries—that the deadline to submit application and supporting documents is on Feb. 28, 2023.

Apply online at www.saipanshefa.com. Create your student profile and submit your application! Here you will have instant access to the status of your application once your application package is submitted.

You must have all the required documents ready to upload in order for your application submission to go through. (PR)

CNMI DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB23-BECQ-42300031

SUBMISSION: FEBRUARY 13, 2023 TIME: 9:00 A.M.

**"SAIPAN OFFICE SPACE RENTAL – 3 YEARS
(OPTION TO RENEW FOR 2 YEARS)"**

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT THE HORIGUCHI BLDG, GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB ARE DUE ON **JANUARY 31, 2022**, CLOSE OF BUSINESS AND CAN BE MADE TO ELI D. CABRERA, VIA E-MAIL AT eli.cabrera@becq.gov.mp OR PHONE AT 670-664-8500/1.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-275 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS AND PROPOSALS OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ELI D. CABRERA
ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ VIVIAN M. LIZAMA
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF:

ANUNCIACION MENDIOLA CAMACHO MAGOFNA
a.k.a. "ASAKO"
Decedent.

CIVIL ACTION NO. 19-0210

NOTICE OF HEARING ON CLAIM FOR HEIRSHIP AND NOTICE TO POTENTIAL HEIRS

Date: February 27, 2023 Time: 1:30 p.m.
Judge: Hon. Kenneth L. Govendo

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a hearing on the Claim for Heirship in the Estate of Anunciacion Mendiola Camacho Magofna, is scheduled to be heard on **February 27, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.**, in the Guma Hustisia, Imwal Aweewe, House of Justice, in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Any and all claims for heirship of Anunciacion Mendiola Camacho Magofna or her estate is hereby required to be filed with the Clerk of Court on or before **February 26, 2023**. This notice shall be published three times in two newspapers of general circulation in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

SO ORDERED this 28th day of December, 2022.

HON. KENNETH L. GOVENDO,
Associate Judge

ANGELO A. NICOLAS
 P.O. Box 501937, Saipan MP 96950
 Telephone: (670) 788-1659

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

IN RE: Civil Action No. 23-0006-CV

ESTATE OF

RONNIE DAVID : **NOTICE OF**

PANCHO : **HEARING**

TO: MA. GINA M. NINAL SURVIVING SPOUSE
GHINALYN NINAL PANCHO AND
RONNIE RICK NINAL PANCHO,
SURVIVING CHILDREN

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., in Courtroom before Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho.

DATED this 17th day of January 2023.

/s/
CLERK OF COURT

**A Northern Mariana Islands Social Service
JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT**

(1) PART-TIME SHELTER WORKER

For more information, job description and an application, visit the Karidat main office at the Sister Remedios Community Center, Chalan Kanoa.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED: A complete application form, copy of diploma/degree, resume/bio-data; current police clearance within 6 months and a copy of a valid CNMI Driver's license.

NO PHONE INQUIRIES PLEASE.
CLOSING DATE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 2023 AT 4:00 PM.

WH unveils push for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders convened federal government officials and community leaders yesterday to mark the release of the Biden-Harris Administration's first-ever National Strategy to Advance Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities.

At a special virtual event, senior Biden-Harris Administration officials outlined the details of 32 federal agency plans that build on the administration's previous actions to promote safety and equity for AA and NHPIs. Community leaders also discussed additional steps the federal government can take to address critical priorities for AA and NHPI communities, including data disaggregation, language access, and combatting anti-Asian hate.

"From day one, President Biden and Vice President Harris have made clear their commitment to address the needs of underserved communities, including Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities," said Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra. "With the release of [yesterday's] national strategy, the public can see the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government approach to advancing equity and addressing the challenges that Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities face."

"These 32 agency action plans are the result of more than a year of work by dedicated public servants in col-



This screengrab from yesterday's virtual event show, clockwise from upper left, John Tien, deputy secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; Julie Su, deputy secretary, U.S. Department of Labor; Vanita Gupta, associate attorney general, U.S. Department of Justice; and Daniel Koh, deputy cabinet secretary, The White House.

ON THE NET

■ Watch the event here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKGDADNmzqw>

laboration with community advocates, and detail specific commitments to advance justice and opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders," said U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Katherine Tai. "These commitments are bold, ambitious, and deeply aligned with the Biden-Harris Administration's broader equity agenda. This national strategy also builds upon our shared progress to ensure the safety and prosperity of our families, neighborhoods, and communities."

The event was moderated by WHIAANHPI executive director Krystal Ka'ai, and included panel discussions moderated by Erika Moritsugu, deputy assistant to the President and AA and NHPI se-

nior liaison, along with Sonal Shah, chief commissioner of the President's Advisory Commission on AA and NHPIs.

Since January 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration has taken steps to address the needs of AA and NHPI communities by advancing policies that promote equity, expanding entry points to federal services and programs, and centering the experiences and resiliency of AA and NHPI communities. To support these efforts, WHIAANHPI engaged federal agencies to improve interagency policymaking, program development, and outreach efforts to AA and NHPI communities across the country.

In summer 2022, 32 agencies—including all 15 executive departments in the

President's Cabinet—submitted agency plans that outline specific actions to advance equity, justice, and opportunity for AA and NHPI communities. These plans are deeply aligned with the Biden-Harris Administration's broader equity agenda and represent a historic first for the federal government.

Participants of the virtual event included:

■ **Secretary Xavier Becerra**, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

WHIAANHPI co-chair

■ **Ambassador Katherine Tai**, U.S. Trade Representative, WHIAANHPI co-chair

■ **Secretary Pete Buttigieg**, U.S. Department of Transportation

■ **Secretary Miguel Cardona**, U.S. Department of Education

■ **Isabella Casillas Guzman**, administrator, United States Small Business Administration

■ **John Tien**, deputy secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

■ **Julie Su**, deputy secretary, U.S. Department of Labor

■ **Nani Coloretti**, deputy director, Office of Management and Budget

■ **Vanita Gupta**, associate attorney general, U.S. Department of Justice

■ **Erika L. Moritsugu**, deputy assistant to the President and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander senior liaison

■ **Chiraag Bains**, deputy assistant to the President on Racial Justice and Equity

■ **Daniel Koh**, deputy cabinet secretary, The White House

■ **Krystal Ka'ai**, executive director, White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific

Islanders and President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

■ **Rep. Judy Chu**, chair, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus

■ **Sonal Shah**, chief commissioner, President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

■ **Daniel Dae Kim**, member, President's Advisory Commission on Asian American, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

■ **Gregg Orton**, national director, National Council of Asian Pacific Americans

■ **Manjusha Kulkarni**, co-founder, Stop AAPI Hate; executive director, AAPI Equity Alliance

■ **Jiny Kim**, vice president of Policy and Programs, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC

■ **Estella Owoimaha-Church**, executive director, Empowering Pacific Islander Communities

■ **Chiling Tong**, chief executive officer and president, National Asian/Pacific Islander American Chamber of Commerce and Entrepreneurship

■ **Kham Moua**, national deputy director, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. (PR)

UOG Press seeking works from young creatives for special youth publication

The University of Guam Press is seeking works from young creatives, including poetry, short stories, creative essays, photographs, art, and music, for a special youth publication.

UOG Press would like to encourage youth to create art that shares the stories and visions most important to them.

The Press will host a series of creative writing and creative arts workshops in support of this aim.

"We want our youth to have the opportunity to become published artists. They'll be able to see their work on the page, alongside other creatives, and they can take pride in sharing it with family and friends," said Ki-ana Brown, project manager for the Youth Empowerment Initiatives at UOG Press.

Writers and artists must be between the ages of 5 and 18 years old to submit. Only original works will be accepted.

Writers may submit up to 10 pages of work while photographers and artists may submit up to five photographs or art pieces.

Submissions must be emailed to uogpress@triton.uog.edu no later than Friday, Sept. 1, 2023.

Additional guidelines can be found on www.uog.edu/uogpress/youth-call-for-submissions.

The workshop series and culminating youth publication are funded by the Governor of Guam's Education Assistance and Youth Empowerment Grant.

Under the grant, the Press

has begun a series of projects aimed at fostering cultural literacy and creative expression in Guam's youth.

To stay updated on all YEG initiatives and community events, follow UOG Press on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter at @uogpress, or sign up for their newsletters at uogpress.com.

About UOG Press

The University of Guam Press publishes an array of academic and literary books and journals with a specific focus on the unique history, environment, peoples, cultures, and languages of the islands that make up the Western Pacific region. Learn more about their services and publications at uogpress.com. (UOG)



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Opinion

Hafa Adair

Saipan Tribune

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Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Stolen election? Not really

It may seem hard to believe, but there remains a hard-core group of partisans who still insist that a presidential election was stolen and that the victor is “illegitimate.”

Perhaps these conspiracy theorists will finally reconsider in the wake of a new study by New York University which concludes that Russian tweets did little to increase Donald Trump's vote count in the 2016 presidential balloting.

“We find no evidence of a meaningful relationship between exposure to the Russian foreign influence campaign and changes in attitudes, polarization or voting behavior,” the study concludes.

In fact, the theory that “Russian meddling” flipped the election to Trump was a fantasy put forth by stunned Democrats as an excuse for Hillary Clinton's many failures. It then devolved into a bludgeon used to pummel Trump during the four years of his presidency.

In 2018, *The New Yorker* magazine, no less than the Bible of progressive orthodoxy, ran a lengthy piece by Jane Mayer touting the theory that Clinton had been the victim of a cyberwar conducted by an American enemy in an effort to install Trump in the Oval Office. She credulously quoted James Clapper, former director of national intelligence, as saying that “it stretches credulity to think the Russians didn't turn the election.”

Yet five years later, the NYU review determined that the Russian “disinformation” campaign was a mere needle buried amid a haystack of election messaging from both Republicans and Democrats, not to mention the legacy media. The findings are in line with two other academic studies.

“Just 1 percent of Twitter users absorbed about 70 percent of the so-called Russian disinformation,” Robby Soave of Reason wrote this week, “meaning that a tiny fraction of overall users encountered actual Russian trolls.” And most of those exposed to this amateur campaign were already supporting Trump, the study determined. The Washington Post noted that “highly partisan Republicans were exposed to nine times more posts than non-Republicans.”

In other words, the idea that Trump became president thanks to Russian collusion or “disinformation” on social media is itself “disinformation.” And the entire scheme never could have blossomed without the cooperation of progressive pundits, journalists and Clinton herself.

This should be no surprise to those who have been paying attention. In May, a former Clinton campaign manager testified in federal court that Clinton approved of a plan to funnel dubious information to a *Slate* reporter claiming Trump had a secret connection to a Russian bank.

“In short, the Clinton campaign created the Trump-Alfa allegation,” *The Wall Street Journal* concluded, “fed it to a credulous press that failed to confirm the allegations but ran with them anyway, then promoted the story as if it was legitimate news.”

Democrats have spent the past two years railing about election denialism as an existential threat to democracy. Perhaps a little more introspection is in order.

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Think Big Tech's thousands of layoffs indicate a coming recession? Think again

Amazon is laying off more than 18,000 workers. Salesforce is shedding 8,000, and Twitter has let go thousands more.

While we should never minimize the difficulties of people facing an unexpected layoff, these announcements by major tech companies are not a large-scale tragedy for the American economy. What would be very bad news is if we saw a marked slowing of the economy, leading to far more layoffs by large and small businesses in a wide variety of sectors.

While job loss can be traumatic for workers, especially from long-held jobs, the reality is that these large-scale layoffs in tech are just a tiny blip in the U.S. labor market, with its 160 million workers. In a strong labor market, like the one we're in currently, close to 1.4 million workers are fired or laid off from their jobs in an average month. Another 4 million leave their jobs voluntarily. With more than 6 million workers getting hired each month, most of those who lose their jobs can count on relatively short spells of unemployment.

This fits with data on the length of time that workers spend unemployed. The most recent reports from December showed that the typical period of unemployment was less than nine weeks.

Going without work for nine weeks can still be a serious hardship, but most recently laid-off workers will be eligible for unemployment benefits, which are around 40% of wages in most states. Higher-paid workers, which would include most of those in the tech sector now facing layoffs, are also likely to have some savings to help them get through a stretch of unemployment.

The workers being laid off by the tech giants are also likely to be re-employed more quickly than people in other sectors. The unemployment rate in the information industry was just 2.2% in December, compared with 3.5% overall.

But should our economy slow, and layoffs expand to other industries and business sizes, we could meet the recession risk that many economists fear as a result of the Federal Reserve Board's interest-rate hikes. These are explicitly designed to slow the economy and reduce hiring. The rationale is that the economy was seeing too much demand, which was pushing wages and prices higher.

The rate hikes are intended to reduce demand for housing, cars and other items. This would reduce the number of jobs in the most affected industries, lessening workers' bargaining power and leading to smaller pay increases and less upward pressure on costs and prices.

By DEAN BAKER

Los Angeles Times

Dean Baker is a senior economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research. He is the author of several books including *Rigged: How Globalization and the Rules of the Modern Economy Were Structured to Make the Rich Richer*.



Should this push to slow the economy go too far, then we will see a very different picture in terms of layoffs and quits, as well as the prospects for workers getting rehired. In the strong labor market we see today, quits outnumber layoffs by close to 3 to 1. In 2009, during the Great Recession, the number of people being laid off was roughly 20% higher than the number of people quitting their job every month.

It was understandable that few people wanted to quit their jobs in the Great Recession; the prospect for finding new jobs was not very good. The typical period of unemployment stretched to almost 20 weeks by the start of 2010. Furthermore, many workers ended their period of unemployment by simply giving up looking for a job, rather than becoming employed. This was an awful period for the tens of millions of workers who were unemployed for stretches of time and for those seriously concerned about losing their jobs.

While that is very different from the labor market we face today, with unemployment reaching its lowest level in more than half a century, economists are wary about the Fed's rate hikes going too far and leading to another recession. The Fed is right to be trying to slow inflation, which got out of hand at the end of 2021 and first part of 2022. The housing market in particular was seeing double-digit inflation.

The rate hikes have succeeded in flipping the picture in the housing market, where prices have stopped rising and are now falling in many parts of the country. The supply chain problems that led to big price increases earlier in the recovery are largely over, and the price of items such as appliances and furniture are now falling.

This is a great success story for the Fed. However, if it raises rates too high, triggering another recession, reports of large-scale layoffs in tech—or in any sector—will be much worse news than they are today.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The Saipan Tribune reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

New start dates for Medicare Part B coverage in 2023

SOCIAL SECURITY COLUMN

By JANE BURIGSA

SOCIAL SECURITY PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Changes are coming in 2023 for when Medicare Part B coverage starts.

What is not changing:

If you are eligible at age 65, your Initial Enrollment Period:

■ Begins three months before your 65th birthday.

■ Includes the month of your 65th birthday.

■ Ends three months after your 65th birthday.

If you are automatically enrolled in Medicare Part B or if you sign up during the first three months of your IEP, your coverage will start the month you're first eligible. If you sign up the month you turn 65, your coverage will start the first day of the following month. This won't change with the new rule.

What is changing:

Starting last Jan. 1, 2023, your Medicare Part B coverage starts the first day of the month after you sign up if you sign up during the last three months of your IEP.

Before this change, if you signed up during the last three months of your IEP, your Medicare Part B coverage started two to three months after you enrolled.

If you don't sign up for Medicare Part B during your IEP, you have another chance each year during the General Enrollment Period. The GEP lasts from Jan. 1 through March 31. Starting Jan. 1, 2023, your coverage starts the first day of the month after you sign up.

You can learn more about these updates on our Medicare webpage at www.ssa.gov/medicare and our Medicare publication at www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10043.pdf.

Artificial intelligence can't reproduce the wonders of original human creativity

The biggest story of the year—the story we should all be paying attention to—is the increasing power of artificial intelligence. Computer code can write itself, chatbots can generate academic papers, and, with a few keystrokes, a website can produce an image worthy to be framed on any wall. Everywhere we turn, AI is outputting text and images that mimic (and often surpass) humans' abilities.

There's so much to be concerned about in these developments, especially in the realms of plagiarism and labor replacement, with artists and writers particularly worried about their job prospects drowning in the infinite sea of AI-generated graphics and essays.

However, after taking stock of AI's current limitations, I don't think that artists and other creatives are in danger of extinction anytime soon. To my mind—and to many theorists, critics and media lovers—the most compelling artistic expressions contain some sort of original idea that reflects a lived human experience, and contemporary AI models lack exactly this capacity. In short: Even if AI bots can create passable text blocks and captivating graphic designs, they cannot fabricate the sort of genuine art that speaks to our humanity.

At their most basic, current AI models are engineered to re-order information they've seen before. While different bots accomplish this task in slightly different ways, each system is designed to observe huge amounts of data and then find predictable ways that the data is ordered. In the case of visual art, a bot studies which colors and shapes tend to occur near one another, while text bots identify how words and topics are organized. These programs then output a convincing painting, poem or essay that re-forms the shapes, words, colors and topics that they've observed within their data sets, always using some version of the organization found in their original data.

Surely, many of our daily tasks involve simple reorderings

of past information, from book reports to obituaries to police sketches to legal briefs. In each, an author does some research and constructs a product based on already-existing information. We should be prepared for AI to dominate these types of recombinational tasks in the coming years.

But none of this is exactly art.

Having an original idea, expression or epiphany—having an experience that no one taught you to have—is a deeply human act and also impossible for AI—at least in the engineering behind today's most-used bots. While an AI-generated poem, story or painting might reorder existing information in new, believable and compelling ways, it is using preexisting building blocks drawn from its data set. This means that profoundly new, paradigm-shifting artistic choices—think: the visual juxtapositions of Frida Kahlo, William Shakespeare's origination of new vocabulary or the jarring imagery of Toni Morrison—are nearly impossible for an AI to invent. Instead, for AI to create anything like these artistic expressions, it must observe human creativity first.

One further simple but crucial fact separates AI bots from genuine originality: They do not experience the world around them. To be sure, much of human knowledge is learned from reading, digesting and recombining already-existing ideas—the book reports and face sketches of our stored knowledge. But the deepest part of human understanding comes from experiencing life around us, with our imperfect bodies scraping up against the outside world as we clumsily learn to live together. No one teaches us the enjoyment of sunlight against our skin or the despair of losing a parent or the fulfillment of growing old with your husband. These feelings arise from simply living in this world, and when we process these feelings through painting or poetry, we are germinating art that refracts components of the human experience.

When a computer writes an essay about love or a poem about

By CHRIS WHITE

Chicago Tribune

Chris White teaches music theory at University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Harvard University. His research uses big data techniques to study how we hear and write music, which is the subject of his book The Music in the Data. He lives in Massachusetts with his husband and son.



loss or paints a warm, glowing sunrise, it is not creating. Instead, it is regurgitating—reporting—aspects of its data set that involve records of past love, loss and light. There's a huge distance between merely collecting data about an experience versus actually having that experience, and there's a chasm between poetry that echoes and reports data and that which expresses a lived exposure to the world around us.

When a song, novel or painting truly moves me, it entangles my own experience into the story being told by that work of art. With only secondhand knowledge of the human experience, AI's output will never actually express the existential sensation of living in the world.

Again, there are many reasons to be excited and concerned about the ascendancy of AI. But I am not worried about AI making art. While there may be a day that AI can generate truly new ideas and can encounter the world with the viscerality and directness of a human, I see a great distance between contemporary technology and that eventuality.

At present, AI can do many things—it can make beautiful visuals, compelling essays and interesting poetry. But it cannot participate in the fleshy, awkward, complex and unique human condition. And because it cannot experience, it cannot create something truly new and meaningful. That solidly remains the domain of us humans.

Trump's toilet probably had more documents than anything found in Biden's garage

If you're into James Bond movies or Jason Bourne novels, or anything else with intrigue and car chases, you have to kind of love it that classified government secrets were stashed in a garage next to a classic Chevy Corvette.

Okay, stashed is kind of strong.

But if you're the Hollywood producer flipping through the screenplay, or the literary agent reading the manuscript, you need something more exciting than the documents were inadvertently placed in the garage.

You also need more than that if you're a Republican out to get the president.

Let's not sugarcoat it. This classified documents thing looks bad, whether you're a Biden-loving Democrat or a fire-breathing Republican member of Congress who hates everyone including your own speaker.

Possession of government secrets in the confines of personal, private civilian space is a big no-no.

According to government officials, a small batch of such documents from Biden's time as vice president was found late last year at Biden's former offices at the Penn Biden Center in Washington.

Months later, officials uncovered more documents from the same period at Biden's personal residence in Wilmington, Delaware. Biden confirmed the documents were in his "locked garage," where he keeps his Corvette, and in his home library.

"My Corvette's in a locked garage," Biden told reporters last

week. "So, it's not like it's sitting on the street."

Ok, Mr. President. There's no need to get testy about it.

The documents were found on your property, and you were the one who told "60 Minutes" how "totally irresponsible" it was for former President Donald Trump to have a stash of government secrets at his Mar-a-Lago estate.

Yes, there's a little hypocrisy at play.

But there is also no need to pretend that any top-secret notes Biden may have inadvertently kept after being vice president stack up anywhere near as high as boxes of documents Trump stole when he was practically dragged out of the White House kicking and screaming.

We're talking about a man who flushed documents down the toilet, according to Maggie Haberman's book "Confidence Man: The Making of Donald Trump and the Breaking of America."

Trump's toilet probably had more documents than anything found in Biden's garage.

That's probably appropriate because any comparisons between the two document discoveries are really a load of crap.

The White House says "a small number of documents with classified markings" from the Obama-Biden administration were found on Nov. 2.

The discovery was made by the president's personal lawyers as they packed files at a Washington office where papers from

By LEONARD GREENE

New York Daily News



Biden's vice presidency were kept and Biden sometimes worked.

The White House notified the National Archives that day and officials picked up the documents the next day.

A few more documents were later found at Biden's home.

Trump, meanwhile, took thousands—thousands—of confidential papers, including Iran missile secrets and China spy documents, to his Florida home when he left the White House.

The stash was uncovered only after the FBI raided the resort after Trump's legal team tried to dodge a subpoena.

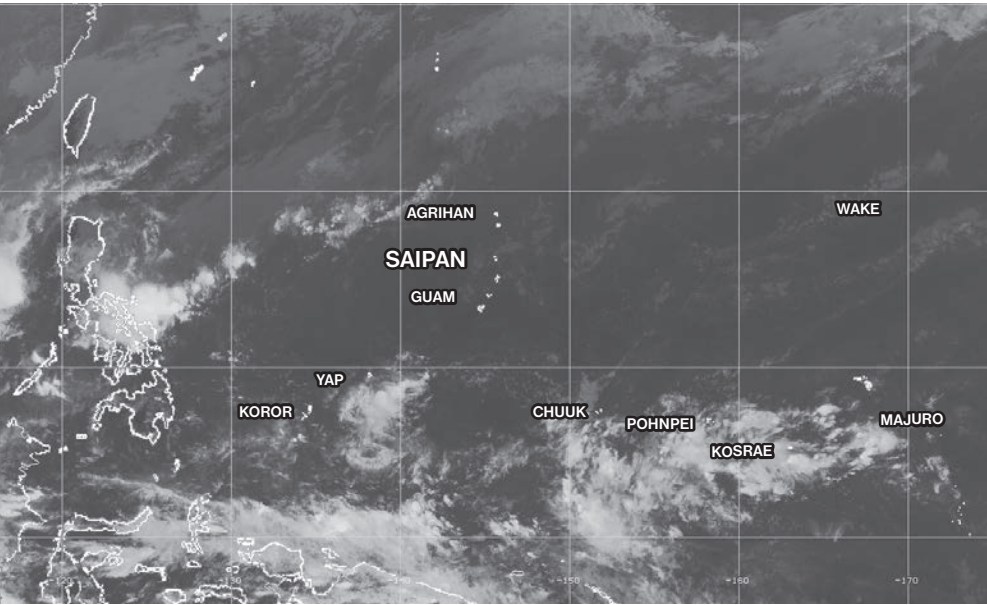
Biden has at least promised to cooperate.

"People know I take classified documents and materials seriously," Biden said.

Just not as seriously as he takes his Corvette.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY	
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny		Isolated showers. Mostly sunny		Mostly sunny		Mostly sunny		Mostly sunny	
86°	76°	86°	76°	86°	76°	86°	76°	88°	76°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 8:01 AM, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2023
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar and satellite show isolated showers moving through the Marianas Waters. The first set have already passed through Saipan, dropping 0.02 inches earlier this morning. The buoys reveal combined seas of 4 to 6 feet, composed mainly of east-northeast swell, with some wind waves from a similar direction on top.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA ▲ ▼ °F		
Guam and Rota	Mostly Sunny	83° / 77°
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	82° / 76°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Scattered Thunderstorms	86° / 81°
Pohnpei	Cloudy	86° / 79°
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 81°
Majuro	Isolated Thunderstorms	85° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:08 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:08 PM
Saturday	6:47 AM	6:09 PM
Sunday	6:47 AM	6:09 PM
Monday	6:47 AM	6:10 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	3:46 AM	3:13 PM	-
Friday	4:53 AM	4:17 PM	-
Saturday	6:00 AM	5:26 PM	-
Sunday	7:02 AM	6:35 PM	-
Monday	7:59 AM	7:42 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE ▲ ▼ °F		
Auckland	Mostly Sunny	77° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny/Wind	38° / 13°
Hong Kong	Sunny	66° / 55°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	81° / 67°
London	Mostly Sunny	40° / 28°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	61° / 42°
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 75°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	65° / 53°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	78° / 71°
New York	Mostly Cloudy	43° / 36°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	51° / 39°
Paris	Showers	42° / 30°
Busan	Sunny	46° / 38°
Rome	Showers	52° / 36°
Salem	Showers	71° / 62°
San Francisco	Showers	54° / 42°
Seoul	Showers	42° / 27°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	48° / 39°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	56° / 39°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY FEET		
6:49 AM	High Tide	1.60
11:26 AM	Low Tide	1.20
4:22 PM	High Tide	1.74
-	-	-

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 17, 2023			
DEPARTURES			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)			
UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)			
PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)			
UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)			
TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
TW9308	3:30AM	7:10AM	2, 4
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily
ARRIVALS			
GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily
NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon
INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
TW9307	9:00PM	2:30AM+1	1, 5
LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. <i>(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)</i>			

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS					
INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022					
SAIPAN TO TINIAN			TINIAN TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)	7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.		10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)	4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)
SAIPAN TO ROTA			ROTA TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.		9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.		2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	
SAIPAN TO GUAM			GUAM TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.		12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.		6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.			
FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022			
SAIPAN TO ROTA			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM			
LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
SAIPAN TO TINIAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily
GUAM TO ROTA			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

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Business

Pink Petals Beauty Salon opens in Garapan

MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Pink Petals Beauty Salon has sprouted in Garapan to cater to the beauty and pampering needs of the community.

Admin officer Jeferson Banciles said the business was borne out of owner Rizally De Leon Joson's fondness for keeping herself presentable at all times.

Pink Petals opened just last Jan. 12 and offers a plethora of services like haircut for both men and women, nail spa, nail manicure and pedicure, and hair and make up for children and adults for bridal, debut, birthday party, and for many more occasions.

They also blow dry, perming setting and permanent perming for small, medium, and long hair, hair treatment, hair rebond, brazilian or botox, hair bleaching, and hair coloring.

Banciles said what sets Pink Petals apart from other beauty salons on Saipan is its unique ambiance, professional beauticians who are all willing to advise and help, and its cleanliness and accessibility in the Garapan area.

"We know there are many beauty salons here on the island, but we have hired professional and expert beauticians from the Philippines. They have the know-how to meet the appropriate solutions especially in treating and fixing women's hair since our climate here in the island is



MARK RABAGO

Pink Petals Beauty Salon is located beside V-Lynn's BBQ along Dama de Noche St. in Garapan.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pink Petals Beauty Salon prides itself with its unique ambiance, cleanliness, and accessibility in the Garapan area.

different and our water is from the sea."

Their current staff include beautician Rollie James Tajos and Rizel Naguiat.

Tajos was the beautician of choice for 2021 Miss Universe Philippines Top 50 Mytimyles Zaragoza, 2022 Miss Teen International Philippines candidate Cariza Nuel Finn Pono, 2022 Hari ng Pilipinas candidate and Bench model Ken DianDian, and 2021 Miss World Philippines candidate Aura Shaznay.

Naguiat has three years of experience in the cosmetology field in the Philippines before coming to Saipan.

Banciles added that Pink Petals will also soon add an expert barber who was trained by no less than famed Filipino hairstylist Ricky Reyes himself, "so that he can share his knowledge and style in cutting hopefully and he will arrive in the middle of 2023."

He said the Josons named the business Pink Petals because of island women's fondness of usually putting flower petals in their ear that symbolizes the purity and stability of a woman.

To celebrate its opening, Pink Petals is offering 50% off on all its services. It is also offering free hot tea to all customers.

Pink Petals is located beside V-Lynn's BBQ along Dama de Noche St. in Garapan. It is open from Tuesday to Sunday, 9am-6pm. For more information or to book an appointment, call (670) 285-8958.



MARK RABAGO

From left, Pink Petals Beauty Salon admin officer Jeferson Banciles, owner Rizally De Leon Joson, and beautician Rollie James Tajos.

United Airlines records \$843 million profit, bullish on 2023

By **DAVID KOENIG**
AP AIRLINES WRITER

United Airlines reported fourth-quarter profit and revenue higher than Wall Street expectations and gave a bullish 2023 forecast that assumes people will keep traveling despite inflation and concern about the economy.

After the stock market closed Tuesday, United said it earned \$843 million in the quarter.

The Chicago-based airline said it is seeing strong demand for flights extending into the new year, which will help the company cover expected increases in labor costs as it negotiates new union contracts.

United predicted that its first-quarter earnings per share will easily top analysts' expectations. Its stock rose modestly, less than 2%, in after-market trading.

The report from United comes on the heels of upbeat comments by its closest rivals, Delta Air Lines and American Airlines.

Officials with all three carriers say that consumers are still booking travel despite concern about the economy — tech companies in particular have been laying off workers — and high inflation.

Airline tickets are contributing to inflation. In December, they cost 28.5% more than a year earlier, according to government figures. United pas-

sengers paid on average 25.5% more per mile than a year ago, and 20.8% more than in late 2019.

Those higher fares are due to strong demand and a limited number of flights as airlines continue to rebuild operations that were slashed after the pandemic devastated air travel.

United said in a regulatory filing that the number of flights this year will be held down by a pilot shortage, the need to keep bigger staffs as a cushion against COVID-10 sick calls, delays in getting new planes, and technology limits.

Most major airlines say they are fully staffed now, although they are catching up on training thousands of new workers, including pilots.

United said its fourth-quarter profit worked out to \$2.46 per share after excluding certain items. That beat Wall Street's mean forecast of \$2.11 per share in adjusted profit, according to a survey by FactSet. Revenue was \$12.4 billion.

For the first quarter, United is projecting profit of 50 cents to \$1 per share, which would exceed the analysts' forecast of 31 cents per share. United said it will earn \$10 to \$12 per share for all of 2023, which would handily beat Wall Street's expectation of \$6.84.

Company officials were scheduled to hold a call with analysts on Wednesday.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Macao jails Suncity founder 18 years over illegal gambling

MACAO (AP)—The founder of Macao's once-biggest casino junket organizer was sentenced Wednesday to 18 years in jail after being convicted of operating illegal gaming activities, running a criminal organization and numerous other charges.

Alvin Chau, former chairman of Suncity Group, was arrested in November 2021 on a warrant based on accusations that he ran an illegal cross-border gambling syndicate with others.

Macao is the only place in China where casinos are legal, and junket operators such as Suncity were a key part of its gaming industry. They helped facilitate gambling for high rollers outside the former Portuguese colony, including arranging travel services and extending credit for them.

Macao prosecutors accused Chau and some co-defendants of running a syndicate that

caused a loss of about \$1 billion in tax revenue to the city's government between 2013 and 2021. They were alleged to have made illegitimate profits through operating side-betting activities. Chau faced nearly 290 charges in one of the gambling hub's biggest criminal cases in years.

Jury selected for Elon Musk trial about Tesla buyout tweets

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—A nine-person jury was seated Tuesday to hear a trial that will determine whether Tesla CEO Elon Musk cheated investors by asserting in 2018 tweets that he had lined up financing to take the electric automaker private.

The five-hour process set the stage for opening statements to begin Wednesday in the case, which is expected to include testimony from Musk to explain his thinking while engaged in one of his favorite activities — tweeting on the Twitter service

that he now owns.

In the Tesla case, Musk's tweets fueled a rally in the company's stock price that abruptly ended a week later after it became apparent that he did not have the funding for a buyout after all. Investors then sued him, saying that Tesla shares would not have swung so widely in value if he had not dangled the prospect of buying the company for \$420 per share.

Emerson reveals \$7.6 billion bid for National Instruments

NEW YORK (AP)—Emerson Electric Co. is going public with its \$7.6 billion bid for National Instruments, saying the company has avoided serious buyout negotiations since early last year.

Emerson bumped up its cash offer for the maker of scientific measuring equipment and software to \$53 per share in November, up from a per-share offer of \$48 that it had made

back in May.

Shares of National Instruments jumped, closing Tuesday up nearly 11%.

Emerson said that it's tried numerous times to initiate private discussions with National Instruments Corp. since May. The St. Louis company said that when it provided its increased bid in November, National Instruments said it had formed a group to look at the proposal and evaluate options. But Emerson said since that time National Instruments has resisted engaging.

Emerson, which makes process controls systems, valves and analytical instruments, noted that it did meet with National Instruments earlier this month, but that National Instruments shared "limited, high-level" information about its business and was unwilling to provide more detailed information. Emerson said it was told by National Instruments that would be the extent of its engagement.

Nation

Utah man who killed family faced 2020 abuse investigation

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—A Utah man who police say fatally shot his wife, her mother and their five kids before turning the gun on himself had been investigated two years prior for child abuse, but local police and prosecutors decided not to criminally charge him, new records released Tuesday show.

Police records obtained by The Associated Press shed light on warning signs and a previous police investigation into a violent pattern of behavior Michael Haight exhibited toward his family.

Authorities said they were aware of previous problems in the home but didn't elaborate during a news conference following the Jan. 4 killings in the small town of Enoch, citing an ongoing investigation.

In a 2020 interview with

authorities, Macie Haight, the family's eldest daughter, detailed multiple assaults, including one where she was choked by her father and "very afraid that he was going to keep her from breathing and kill her."

The child abuse investigation followed an Aug. 27, 2020, police call from a non-family member reporting potential child abuse. Macie, then 14, told investigators that her father's violence started in 2017 and had included choking and shaking, including a recent incident where he grabbed her by the shoulders and banged her into a wooden piece along the back of the couch.

Two years later, police found eight bodies at the family's home, including Macie's. The murder-suicide rocked Enoch,

an 8,000-person, southern Utah town on the outskirts of Cedar City where neighbors and members of the local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints described the Haight family as a loving family.

An obituary published in the St. George Spectrum last week described Michael Haight in glowing terms as an Eagle Scout, businessman and father who "made it a point to spend quality time with each and every one of his children." The obituary made no mention of the killings and was taken offline after backlash.

Police believe Haight, 42, carried out the shootings two weeks after his wife had filed for divorce and just days after her relatives say he took guns from the house that could have been used to stop him.

Two years before, in his inter-

view with investigators, Haight denied assaulting his daughter and said the report was a misunderstanding. He said Macie was "mouthy" and admitted to getting angry, attributing some struggles to his father's death and brother's divorce.

The investigator's notes also shed light on Haight's treatment of his wife, Tausha Haight. Macie told investigators that her father would often belittle her mother, a charge he denied. In his interview, however, Michael Haight said he had taken his wife's iPad and cellphone to surveil her text messages to check if she had spoken negatively about his family.

Tausha Haight told authorities she didn't want criminal charges filed against her husband and hoped the incident would be "a wake-up

call" for him.

Though an investigator told Michael Haight that his behavior was "close to assaultive," Enoch Police and the Iron County Attorney decided not to file criminal charges against him.

Enoch Police didn't respond Tuesday to a request for comment about why charges were not filed. The Iron County Attorney's office said in a statement Tuesday that their office had been called in 2020 and determined there was insufficient evidence to pursue charges against Haight.

"Although specifics are not articulated, this conclusion was likely based on an inability to prove each element of the offense(s) beyond reasonable doubt and/or statute of limitations barriers," the statement said.

It added that prosecutors

were not sent interview transcripts or police reports from the Enoch Police to review.

Matt Munson, the attorney representing Michael Haight's family, was not immediately available to comment.

Police found the Haight family's bodies after conducting a welfare check based on a call from a friend who said Tausha Haight had missed an appointment earlier in the week.

Officials said last week that law enforcement is continuing to investigate the Haight family deaths. The murder-suicide drew national attention and words of condolence from Utah officials and President Joe Biden. It underscored how family mass killings have become a disturbingly common tragedy across the United States, occurring on average every 3.5 weeks for the last two decades.

California sees extensive storm damage as weather calms



Stephanie Beard, of Brentwood, carries a sand bag to her flooded home on Bixler Road in Brentwood, Calif., on Monday, Jan. 16, 2023.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Key roadways remained closed and officials estimated thousand of homes were seriously damaged in California as weeks of wild weather that flooded roadways, collapsed hillsides and toppled countless trees finally became calm Tuesday.

Tallying the damage will take time, but the number of houses and other structures that will be red-tagged as uninhabitable could be in the "low thousands," said Brian Ferguson, spokesperson for the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

The damage is spread across 41 of California's 58 counties, Ferguson said.

In unincorporated Santa

Barbara County, after more than 60 inspections at properties that sustained damage from mudslides and downed trees, four homes were red-tagged and 32 were yellow-tagged as needing extensive repairs, said Kelsey Buttitta, the county's communications manager.

"Also we're seeing a lot— a lot— of damage when it comes to roads," she said, estimating that more than a dozen are fully closed. "Some roads are completely washed away."

There is no estimated reopening date for State Route 154, a key north-south artery in the county that is inundated with mud and rocks, Buttitta said.

Nine atmospheric rivers since late December caused power outages, flooding, levee breaks, washouts and landslides nearly statewide. At least 20 people were killed.

Light rain and snow showers lingered Tuesday in some areas across California, but the skies were finally largely clear.

A shot of precipitation from a quick system was predicted for Wednesday or Thursday, followed by a dry period, the National Weather Service said.

Forecasters cautioned that although the midweek rainfall will be light, it could be enough to cause problems because the state is so saturated.

Flood warnings remained in effect for the Salinas River in

Monterey County and parts of Mariposa and Merced counties in the Central Valley.

Officials in Ventura County said it could take up to three weeks to clear the only road into the remote canyon community of Matilija in the Los Padres National Forest near Ojai. Repairs could take six months. More than 70 residents were evacuated by helicopter, but a handful have refused to leave, according to the Ventura County Sheriff's Office.

"Towering piles of rock and mud reach over 40 feet (12 meters) tall in some locations, blocking access to roadways and leaving residents isolated to the canyon," the sheriff's office said in a weekend statement.

ACROSS THE NATION

3 get life in slaying of Michigan guard over face mask order

FLINT, Mich. (AP)—A married couple and their son convicted of first-degree premeditated murder in the fatal shooting of a security guard who demanded the woman's daughter wear a mask while shopping were sentenced Tuesday to life in prison without parole.

Larry Teague, wife Sharmel Teague, and Sharmel Teague's son, Ramonyea Bishop, were sentenced by Genesee Circuit Court Judge Brian Pickell in the shooting death of Calvin Munerlyn on May 1, 2020.

The three were convicted of first-degree premeditated murder, a crime that carries a mandatory punishment of life in prison without parole, following a trial that spanned several weeks, The Flint Journal reported.

Polar bear kills woman, boy in remote Alaska village

WALES, Alaska (AP)—A polar bear has attacked and killed two people in a remote village in western Alaska, according to state troopers.

Alaska State Troopers said they received the report of the attack at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday in Wales, on the western tip of the Seward Peninsula, KTUU reported.

"Initial reports indicate that a polar bear had entered the community and had chased multiple residents," troopers wrote. "The bear fatally attacked an adult female and juvenile male."

The bear was shot and killed by a local resident as it attacked the pair, troopers said.

The names of the two people killed were not released. Troopers said they were working to notify family members.

Troopers and the state Department of Fish and Game are planning to travel to Wales once weather allows for it, the dispatch said.

Court to hear appeal of ex-officer in murder of George Floyd

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)—An attorney for Derek Chauvin is planning to ask an appeals court Wednesday to throw out the former Minneapolis police officer's convictions in the murder of George Floyd, arguing that numerous legal and procedural errors deprived him of a fair trial.

Floyd died on May 25, 2020, after Chauvin, who is white, pinned the Black man to the ground with his knee on his neck for 9 1/2 minutes. A bystander video captured Floyd's fading cries of "I can't breathe." Floyd's death touched off protests around the world and forced a painful national reckoning with police brutality and racism.

Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill sentenced Chauvin to 22 1/2 years after jurors found him guilty of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Chauvin later pleaded guilty to a federal civil rights charge and was sentenced to 21 years in federal prison, which is he is now serving in Arizona concurrent with his state sentence.

Asia

Nobel winner Ressa, news outlet cleared of tax evasion



Filipino journalist Maria Ressa, one of the winners of the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize and Rappler CEO, speaks to the media after a court decision at the Court of Tax Appeals in Quezon City, Philippines Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2023.

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa and her online news company were cleared Wednesday of tax evasion charges she said were among a slew of legal cases used by former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to try to muzzle critical reporting.

The Court of Tax Appeals ruled that prosecutors failed to prove “beyond reasonable doubt” that Ressa and Rappler Holdings Corp. evaded tax payments in four instances after raising capital through partnerships with two foreign investors. “The acquittal of the accused is based on the findings of the court...that respondents did not commit the crime charge,” the court said in its decision.

Rappler welcomed the court decision as “the triumph

of facts over politics.”

“We thank the court for this just decision and for recognizing that the fraudulent, false, and flimsy charges made by the Bureau of Internal Revenue do not have any basis in fact,” Rappler said in a statement. “An adverse decision would have had far-reaching repercussions on both the press and the capital markets.”

“Today, facts win, truth wins, justice wins,” Rappler quoted Ressa as saying after the verdict was announced.

Human Rights Watch said the tax charges under Duterte’s rule were “bogus and politically motivated” and the acquittal of Ressa and Rappler “is a victory for press freedom in the Philippines.”

Ressa won the Nobel with

Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov in 2021 for fighting for the survival of their news organizations, defying government efforts to shut them. The two were honored for “their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace.”

The tax charges against Ressa and Rappler stemmed from a separate charge by the Securities and Exchange Commission, Manila’s corporate watchdog, in 2018 that the news website violated a constitutional provision that prohibits foreign ownership and control of Philippine media companies when it received funds from foreign investors Omidyar Network and North Base Media through financial papers called Philippine Depositary Receipts.

New South Wales Ambulance confirmed its paramedics responded to the alert.

A mayday call is issued when a flight is in grave and imminent danger and needs immediate assistance, according to Airservices Australia.

Qantas did not immediately respond to the AP’s request for comment.

Yellen to meet with Chinese finance minister in Switzerland

WASHINGTON (AP)—Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will meet with her Chinese counterpart, Vice Premier Liu He, in Switzerland on Wednesday to discuss economic developments between the two nations.

The Zurich talks will be a

follow-up to the November meeting between President Joe Biden and China’s Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit in Bali, Indonesia. The two world leaders agreed to empower key senior officials to maintain communication.

Strains between the world’s two leading economies have been growing despite their trade ties. The Biden administration has blocked the sale of advanced computer chips to China and is considering a ban on investment in some Chinese tech companies, possibly undermining a key economic goal that Xi set for his country. Statements by the Democratic president that the U.S. will defend Taiwan against a Chinese invasion have increased tensions.

World

Russian strike toll: 45 dead civilians, including six kids

DNIPRO, Ukraine (AP)—The death toll from the Ukraine war’s deadliest attack on civilians at one location since last spring reached 45 at an apartment building a Russian missile blasted in the southeastern city of Dnipro, officials said Tuesday.

Those killed in the Saturday afternoon strike included six children, with 79 people injured, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on the Telegram messaging app. The toll included two dozen people initially listed as missing at the multistory building, which housed about 1,700, according to Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the Ukrainian president’s office.

Emergency crews cleared some 9 metric tons (9.9 tons) of rubble during a non-stop search and rescue operation, the Dnipro City Council said. About 400 people lost their homes, with 72 apartments completely ruined and another 236 damaged beyond repair, it added.

People converged at the site Tuesday to lay flowers, light candles and bring plush toys. For a third day in a row, Dnipro resident Oleksandr Pohorielov came to mourn.

“It’s like coming to the cemetery to your family. It’s a memory, to say a proper goodbye. To remain a human after all,” he explained as an intense

reek of burning emanated from the building’s ruins.

Volunteers helped Nadiia Yaroshenko’s son escape from their third floor apartment on a makeshift ladder but their white cat Belash refused to leave. He remains in his favorite place at a window that is now blown out, Yaroshenko said, desperately trying to see him from the courtyard with a flashlight.

“We cannot reach the apartment even with rescuers because the apartment is in an emergency and dangerous condition. Walls could collapse there every minute,” she said.

The latest deadly Russian strike on a civilian target in the almost 11-month war triggered outrage. It also prompted the surprise resignation on Tuesday of a Ukrainian presidential adviser who had said the Russian missile exploded and fell after the Ukrainian air defense system shot it down, a version that would take some of the blame off the Kremlin’s forces.

Oleksii Arestovych’s comments in a Saturday interview caused an outcry. He said as he quit that his remarks were “a fundamental mistake.” Ukraine’s air force had stressed that the country’s military did not have a system that could down Russia’s Kh-22 supersonic missiles, the type that hit the apartment building.

Zelenskyy vowed “to ensure that all Russian murderers, everyone who gives and executes orders on missile terror against our people, face legal sentences. And to ensure that they serve their punishment.”

The British Defense Ministry said Tuesday that the weekend barrage of long-range missiles, the first of its kind in two weeks, targeted Ukraine’s power grid.

The Kh-22 was designed during Soviet times to strike enemy ships. It can also be used against ground targets, but with much less precision. Observers have said that Russia has increasingly used older weapons, including those intended for other purposes, to attack targets in Ukraine in what could be a sign of the depletion of Russian stockpiles of modern precision weapons. The U.K. ministry noted that the Kh-22 “is notoriously inaccurate when used against ground targets as its radar guidance system is poor at differentiating targets in urban areas,” suggesting that might have been a factor in the deaths in the Dnipro.

Similar missiles were used in other incidents that caused high civilian casualties, it said, including a strike on a shopping mall in Ukraine’s central city of Kremenchuk in June that officials said killed more than 20 people.

World Food Program chief: Somali famine slowed, not avoided

DAVOS, Switzerland

(AP)—The head of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning World Food Program says support from donors like the United States and Germany have allowed it to postpone—though not entirely avert—famine in Somalia but stressed that “we’re not out of this yet.”

WFP Executive Director David Beasley said countries in the Horn of Africa have faced “unprecedented climate impact” from years of drought, and the U.N. agency had been expecting to announce famine in Somalia before donors “stepped up in magnificent ways.”

“And we’ve been able to—I don’t know if the right word is ‘avert’ famine—but we definitely have postponed it,” he told The Associated Press at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on Tuesday. “We’ve been fortunate so far, given the climate shocks inside Somalia. But we’re not

out of this yet.”

But he warned that “we still could end up with a famine technically in Somalia” because “famine-like conditions” already exist.

“Once you officially declare to be a famine, well, it’s too late,” Beasley said.

Famine is the extreme lack of food and a significant death rate from outright starvation or malnutrition combined with diseases like cholera. A formal famine declaration means data shows more than a fifth of households have extreme food gaps, more than 30% of children are acutely malnourished and over two people out of 10,000 are dying every day.

Beasley, who has announced plans to step down in April, has parlayed his political experience as a former Republican governor of the U.S. state of South Carolina to wrest greater funding for the World Food Program from Washington under both the Biden and

Trump administrations.

The United States announced \$411 million in additional funding for Somalia’s crisis last month after a report by the U.N. and other experts said more than 8 million Somalis are badly food insecure because of drought and high food prices. Thousands have died.

When Beasley took the job in 2017, some 80 million people worldwide were on the brink of starvation and faced chronic hunger. Conflict, climate change and COVID-19 have caused that to balloon to 350 million today because of economic devastation and supply-chain disruptions.

“You think you can’t get any worse. Then the breadbasket of the world is shut down: Ukraine,” Beasley said. “Now (the country has) the longest bread lines in the world,” alluding to Russia’s war that has upended food production and exports from Ukraine.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Qantas plane lands safely after mayday call made over ocean

SYDNEY (AP)—A Qantas flight traveling from New Zealand to Sydney landed safely after it issued a mayday call over the Pacific Ocean on Wednesday.

Qantas Flight 144 landed at Sydney Airport from Auckland, New Zealand, after a 3.5-hour flight between the neighboring nations’ most populous cities.

The Boeing 737 experienced an issue with one of its two engines about an hour from Sydney, Qantas told Australian Broadcasting Corp. in a statement.

The mayday was downgraded to a PAN—possible assistance needed—before the flight landed.

Environment

MOVING SPECIES EMERGES AS LAST RESORT AS CLIMATE WARMS

AP
In this photo provided by the Pacific Rim Conservation, wildlife workers relocate Tristram's storm petrels on Hawaii's Tern Island, on March 29, 2022.



By **CHRISTINA LARSON** and
MATTHEW BROWN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

In a desperate effort to save a seabird species in Hawaii from rising ocean waters, scientists are moving chicks to a new island hundreds of miles away.

Moving species to save them—once considered taboo—is quickly gaining traction as climate change upends habitats. Similar relocations are being suggested for birds, lizards, butterflies and even flowers.

Concerns persist that the novel practice could cause unintended harm the same way invasive plants and animals have wreaked havoc on native species.

But for the Tristram's storm petrels on northeastern Hawaii's Tern Island, which is just 6 feet (1.8 meters) above sea level, the relocation of about 40 chicks to artificial burrows more than 500 miles (805 kilometers) away on Oahu could offer new hope. The species is considered vulnerable to extinction, and the goal is for the young petrels return to their new home when old enough to breed.

"Tern Island is washing away," said biologist Eric VanderWerf of the nonprofit Pacific Rim Conservation. "Climate change is causing a greater need for this—for taking a species outside its known historical range."

A pending change to the U.S. Endangered Species Act

by the Biden administration would make it easier to relocate some of the most imperiled species to places where they've not previously been recorded.

In response, state wildlife officials and scientists have suggested moving a portion of some species struggling with climate change, including Key deer of southern Florida, the Karner blue butterfly of the Midwest and Northeast, desert flowers in Nevada and California and the St. Croix ground lizard in the Virgin Islands.

Republicans in western states—including Montana, New Mexico and Arizona—are against the proposal saying it could wreak ecological havoc as "invasive species" get purposefully introduced.

The proposal, which federal officials expect to finalize in June, reflects a "fundamental shift in the way we think of species protection and conservation," said University of Notre Dame biologist Jason McLachlan.

The issue goes beyond endangered species, McLachlan said, and raises questions about what should be considered "native" now that shifting temperatures are pushing some species to higher elevations or toward the planet's poles.

Comparable temperature shifts in the past occurred over millennia, but the present one is happening over just decades and is drastically upend-

ing ecosystems. "Eventually we're going to have to start thinking about it in ways that will make people—including me—uncomfortable," he said. "To say this species is OK and this species is not OK, that's asking a lot of human beings."

To save storm petrels, VanderWerf said, scientists need to act before populations have crashed. "In 30 years, these birds will certainly be rare, if we don't do something about it," he said.

Relocation of species outside historical ranges is still a rarity, but U.S. wildlife officials have identified numerous threatened and endangered plants and animals already being affected by climate change: glacial stoneflies in Montana, emperor penguins in Antarctica, the Mt. Rainier ptarmigan, the saltmarsh sparrow of the Atlantic coast and numerous birds of Hawaii.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spokesperson Karen Armstrong said there are no current proposals to establish new populations of those particular species. "In the future, some species' ranges may shift due to climate change, or their current habitats might become unsuitable due to invasive species encroachment," Armstrong said in an email. "We view experimental population establishment outside of their historical ranges as a potential tool for their management and

conservation."

One plan now being considered by U.S. wildlife officials concerns birds native to Guam, where kingfishers were decimated by brown tree snakes accidentally brought to the island around 1950 on military cargo ships.

The last 29 wild Guam kingfishers were captured in the 1980s and have been bred in captivity to buy time. Under a pending proposal, nine kingfishers would be released back into the wild beginning this year on Palmyra Island, more than 3,600 miles (5,800 kilometers) away.

If a relocation is successful, the kingfishers would become one of the few species ever upgraded from "extinct in the wild" to "critically endangered."

The hope is that the Guam kingfisher, also known locally as sihek, will eventually be returned to their native island, if the tree snake is controlled, said Erica Royer, a bird expert at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Washington, D.C.

"This kind of intensive management is necessary for us to have a reasonable shot at holding onto some species," said Don Lyons with National Audubon Society's Seabird Institute.

Yet the potential danger—and scientific debate—lies in what humans can't predict. Humanity has been moving species around for centuries, often inadvertently and some-



AP
This 2013 image provided by the U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife shows the St. Croix ground lizard in Buck Island, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.



AP
In this April 2018 photo provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a wildlife worker holds a Tristram's storm petrel chick in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, Hawaii.

times causing great harm.

Examples abound: Asian carp have spread through rivers and streams across the U.S. Starlings from Europe destroy crops and drive out songbirds. Zebra mussels from Eurasia decimate native populations. And kudzu vines from Japan planted to stabilize soils have spread to dozens of states where they choke out other plants.

Scientist Mark Schwartz at the University of California, Davis said he was initially skeptical of moving species for conservation when biologists began discussing the idea about a decade ago. The rapid rate of extinctions

more recently has him thinking that sitting idle could be a costly error.

"Many, many species" must be moved or could go extinct, said James Watson, a conservation scientist at the University of Queensland in Australia, where increasingly severe, climate-fueled wildfires have forced conversations on relocations. Unprecedented fires three years ago likely destroyed the last habitats of some endangered species, he said.

"We've already played Russian Roulette with the climate, we're already on that ski run—we might as well take some more risks."

Life & Style

Art professor sues after firing over Prophet Muhammad images

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)—Attorneys for an adjunct art professor said Tuesday she is suing the Minnesota university that dismissed her after a Muslim student objected to depictions of the Prophet Muhammad in a global art course, while the university admitted to a “misstep” and plans to hold public conversations about academic freedom.

In her lawsuit, Erika López

Prater alleges that Hamline University—a small, private school in St. Paul—subjected her to religious discrimination and defamation, and damaged her professional and personal reputation.

“Among other things, Hamline, through its administration, has referred to Dr. López Prater’s actions as ‘undeniably Islamophobic,’” her attorneys said in a statement. “Comments

like these, which have now been published in news stories around the globe, will follow Dr. López Prater throughout her career, potentially resulting in her inability to obtain a tenure track position at any institution of higher education.”

In Minnesota, a lawsuit can be started by serving a summons and a complaint to the party being sued. Attorneys for López Prater said the lawsuit

was served to Hamline University on Tuesday and will soon be filed in court.

Hamline University President Fayneese Miller and Ellen Watters, the Board of Trustees chair, released a joint statement Tuesday saying recent “communications, articles and opinion pieces” have led the school to “review and re-examine our actions.”

“Like all organizations, some-

times we misstep,” the statement said. “In the interest of hearing from and supporting our Muslim students, language was used that does not reflect our sentiments

on academic freedom. Based on all that we have learned, we have determined that our usage of the term ‘Islamophobic’ was therefore flawed.”

Leslie Jones promises to be herself when she hosts ‘The Daily Show’

NEW YORK (AP)—Comedian Leslie Jones will be taking a temporary whirl as host of “The Daily Show” this week, and she says viewers can expect her trademark—some blunt, edgy humor.

“I’m not Jon Jones Stewart. I’m not Trevor Noah, I’m Leslie Jones. So I’ll be bringing that vulnerable honesty,” the “Saturday Night Live” alum joked in an interview on the eve of her new gig.

Jones’ stand-in as host on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday on the Com-



edy Central topical show yields to four more upcoming weekly gigs by comedians: Wanda Sykes, D.L. Hughley, Chelsea Handler and Sarah Silverman.

Jones’ guest on Tuesday will be Morris Chestnut, starring in “The

Best Man: The Final Chapters.” In a video promoting her guest host gig, correspondent Roy Wood Jr. is seen helping her practice identifying prominent people like Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Supreme Court Clarence Thomas.

Sally Field to receive SAG lifetime achievement

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Sally Field will be honored at the 29th Screen Actors Guild Awards with the SAG lifetime achievement award.

The actors guild announced Tuesday that Field will be the 58th recipient of the tribute award, following recent honorees including Helen Mirren, Robert De Niro, Alan Alda and Morgan Freeman.

“She has an enduring career because she is authentic in her performance and always projects likability and humanity—



Field

she just connects. That’s part of why she has sustained her massive fandom and incredibly rich and layered career,” said Fran Drescher, SAG-AFTRA president, in a statement. “Sally is a massive star with a working ac-

tor’s ethos -- just keep doing the work, being as good as you can. Every stage of an actor’s life brings different opportunities, and you just need to keep working. Sally does not stop and we hope she never does.”

Porn actor Ron Jeremy found unable to stand trial for rape

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A Los Angeles judge on Tuesday declared that porn performer Ron Jeremy is mentally incompetent to stand trial on dozens of rape and sexual assault counts.

Superior Court Judge Ronald S. Harris said in a hearing that after reviewing reports from both prosecutors and Jeremy’s defense that he is in “incurable neurocognitive decline” from which he is unlikely to recover.

Prosecutors asked that he be periodically reevaluated.

A hearing on placing the 69-year-old Jeremy, whose legal name is Ronald Hyatt, in a state hospital will be held next month.



FILE - Former adult film star Ron Jeremy appears for his arraignment on rape and sexual assault charges at Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center, in Los Angeles on June 26, 2020.

Jeremy pleaded not guilty after a grand jury indicted him on 34 counts of sexual assault, including 12 counts of rape.

“When he was arrested two years ago I said he would be found innocent of all charges,” Jeremy’s attorney Stuart Goldfarb said in an email. “Two years have passed and with the additional discovery I received I believed he would have been found innocent. It is unfortunate due to mental condition he will not go to trial and have the opportunity to clear his name.”

Jeremy, who has remained in jail since his arrest in 2020, did not attend the hearing.

An email seeking comment Tuesday from the District Attorney’s Office was not immediately returned.

Nicknamed “The Hedgehog,” Jeremy has been among the best known and most prolific actors in the porn industry for decades, and became a recognizable pop cultural novelty through reality shows, public appearances and music videos.

He has long been a magnet for seekers of autographs and selfies, which is how he first encountered most of the women and girls aged 15 to 51 he is accused of assaulting between the 1990s and 2019.

Renner says he’s home from hospital after snow plow accident

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Actor Jeremy Renner says he is out of the hospital after being treated for serious injuries from a snow plow accident.

In response to a Twitter post Monday about his Paramount+ TV series “Mayor of Kings-



Renner

town,” Renner tweeted, “Outside my brain fog in recovery,

I was very excited to watch episode 201 with my family at home.” Renner was run over by his own 7-ton Pistenbully snow groomer in Nevada while trying to use it to free a relative’s vehicle on a private road near Lake Tahoe on New Year’s Day, authorities said.

The accident left him in

critical condition with major chest trauma and other injuries, according to a Renner representative.

Authorities are still investigating but have said there were no signs that Renner was impaired and no indication of any foul play.

The 52-year-old two-time Oscar nominee plays Hawkeye in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and has a recurring role in the “Mission Impossible” franchise.

Friend feels abandoned at worst possible time

DEAR ABBY: The last two years have been especially tough. I went through a breakup after a four-year relationship, my dog developed cancer and I had to put her to sleep, and I caught COVID and have been dealing with long-haul symptoms ever since. My energy is low because of it, plus I’ve been depressed with all the events that have happened.

I have two best friends I’ve known since I was 16. I’m 34 now. I thought they would be there for me through anything. We were close until recently. They no longer invite me to get-togethers, and they hang out and exclude me. I try to stay in contact, but when I talk with them, it doesn’t progress from small talk. The few times I have seen them, I stayed positive and didn’t discuss my problems.

They have children, and I’m single and childless, which may have caused the divide between us. Being excluded hurts. When I mention it, they say, “You don’t have kids. I didn’t think you’d want to come.” It feels like a slap in the face. I need my friends more than ever right now because I feel very alone through one of the toughest times of my life. How do I mend these friendships? Am I unreasonable for being upset?

DISAPPOINTED FRIEND IN VIRGINIA

DEAR FRIEND: Discuss your feelings with your friends. They may not be trying to isolate you intentionally. You are in very different phases of your lives right

now. They may sincerely believe that being invited to kid parties would bore you, as would their constant chatter about what their precious little ones are doing, saying, etc. (This may seem like blasphemy, but more than a few childless adults feel that way.)

If you explain that you need their emotional support after everything you have been through, they may step forward. Recognize that your friends with kids are a “package deal.” If you bond with their kids, it might bring you all closer. However, if that doesn’t happen, you will have to summon the energy to find new friends whose lives better align with yours.

■■■■■

DEAR ABBY: I bought my roommate the most beautiful pair of earrings for her birthday. It has been more than a month, and she still hasn’t worn them, not even when I once suggested it, although she has frequently worn a second pair of earrings I previously bought her.

I don’t have pierced ears, but the earrings in question could be made into an adorable necklace. I think if she doesn’t want them, it would be nice for me to get them back since they were expensive and I like them so much myself. How can I politely ask if she plans on ever wearing them, and if not, if I can have them back? Or would it work better if I suggest that we can each get one earring made into a necklace so that we can match?

DEAR ABBY

By **ABIGAIL VAN BUREN**

UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



BEJEWELED IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR BEJEWELED: Ask your roommate to tell you honestly if she likes the earrings you gave her. Tell her that if she doesn’t, you DO like them—very much—and would be glad to gift her something else of her choosing. THEN suggest that she might return the earrings to you so you can use them to make matching necklaces. I don’t think it would be rude, and neither should she.

■■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in “The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It.” To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

NOTHING I DO IS MY FAULT.

MY FAMILY IS DYSFUNCTIONAL AND MY PARENTS WON'T EMPOWER ME! CONSEQUENTLY, I'M NOT SELF-ACTUALIZED!

MY BEHAVIOR IS ADDICTIVE FUNCTIONING IN A DISEASE PROCESS OF TOXIC CODEPENDENCY! I NEED HOLISTIC HEALING AND WELLNESS BEFORE I'LL ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS!

ONE OF US NEEDS TO STICK HIS HEAD IN A BUCKET OF ICE WATER.

I LOVE THE CULTURE OF VICTIMHOOD.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THIS AMAZING 12-COURSE MEAL THAT I JUST ATE

TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT...

BURP!

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

FANCY, I'M HAVING A TEA PARTY. UNFORTUNATELY, YOU'RE NOT INVITED.

IT'S JUST BECAUSE YOU AND MY DAD ARE LIKE OIL AND WATER.

I HEARD THAT!

SICK BURN, FANCY, BUT YOU'RE NOT HELPING YOUR CASE.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

YOU SHOULD TAKE SOMETHING FOR YOUR CONSTIPATION.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION ON FIBER SUPPLEMENTS?

WELL, TO PARAPHRASE WILL ROGERS, I NEVER METAMUCIL I DIDN'T LIKE.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Lowly segment

5 Nashville venue

9 Napkin's perch

12 Russian river

13 Mortgage again, for short

14 "Blue?"

15 Tiered bakery buy

17 Tri-umphed

18 Size up

19 Philosopher John

21 Penny (Abbr.)

22 Military award

24 Actor's quest

27 Joke

28 Lavish party

31 In the style of

32 Acapulco gold

33 Zodiac animal

34 Church furniture

36 Hosp. areas

DOWN

1 Toni Morrison

2 Historic periods

3 Beams

4 Sheep's coat

5 Tolkien villains

6 Pot pie morsel

7 "Bobby" subj.

8 Relinquish

9 Supreme Court

10 Out of control

11 Yearn

16 Trio after

20 Klutz

22 Tie the knot

23 Swelled heads

24 Knock

25 Flamenco cheer

26 Mowing, and the like

27 Hoodlum

29 — chi

30 911 responder

35 Bracketed word

37 Unselfish one

39 Frasier's brother

40 Lob's path

41 Diplomacy

42 Nevada neighbor

43 Whale groups

44 Convention freebie

45 New news

46 Dele undoer

49 Sports drink suffix

50 Squealer

Solution time: 24 mins.

Yesterday's answer 1-19

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Shawn Johnson East, 31; Drea de Matteo, 51; Katey Sagal, 69; Dolly Parton, 77.

Happy Birthday: Keep life simple, be direct and arrange to change what is no longer benefiting you. Stick to the script, be honest about what you want and refuse to spend more than your budget can handle. Look for an alternative way to cut costs or bring in cash. Finding a balance between work and play, spending and saving, and a healthy lifestyle and overindulgence is encouraged. Your numbers are 8, 15, 24, 29, 32, 46, 48.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Excess is the enemy. Don't overdo it or share sensitive information. Take a moment to evaluate the situation and the people you deal with before you respond. Listen, be attentive and protect your property. Focus on physical fitness, self-improvement and love. ★★★★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Protect your health, wealth and reputation. Speak up and search for the best way to use your skills, experience and knowledge to avoid being taken advantage of and to develop what you want to happen. Don't stop when it's time to act. ★★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Slow down, take a moment to review your strategy and adjust any foreseeable problems quickly. Call on those you value for what they know and contribute. You'll gain respect if you handle matters efficiently and effectively. Romance is encouraged. ★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Nurture relationships. Pay attention to what others say and do, and respond with honesty and integrity. Head down an affordable path that you can apply precision and detail to every step of the

way. Don't allow anyone to derail your plans or prospects. ★★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Fly under the radar and avoid interference. Set your sights on increasing your awareness about things that concern you. Expand your knowledge and interests to include subjects and pastimes that someone you want to spend more time with enjoys doing. ★★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): A positive suggestion will far exceed criticism. Be open to others' opinions and willing to finish whatever you start. Make room in your schedule to physically make a difference to someone who needs your help. Offer a unique alternative, and a surprise offer will unfold. ★★★★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Emotions will spin out of control if given a chance. Avoid talks that make you uncomfortable and arguments you cannot win. Look inward and strive for personal improvements that make you stand out and become super appealing to those observing your every move. ★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Let facts and figures guide you. Face-to-face discussions will reinforce your confidence and encourage you to forge ahead with confidence instead of hesitation. Protect your physical well-being, home and profile. Have a backup plan and damage control in place. ★★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You don't have to exaggerate or overspend to impress someone. Let kindness lead the way and living up to your promises stoke your reputation. A straightforward approach to life, love and the events you participate in will benefit you considerably. Romance is favored. ★★★★★

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Uncertainty will prevail if you don't address concerns with someone who tends to interfere with your plans. Make what you want and plan to do clear, then proceed. Don't spend on something you don't need or change what still works sufficiently. ★★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You won't have to stand alone. Share your thoughts and feelings, and the feedback you get will help you make the right decision. Change begins with you. Take a positive step forward and make your dreams come true. Romance looks promising. ★★★★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Keep your thoughts to yourself and avoid dealing with red-tape issues or government or institutional agencies. Keeping secrets until you have worked out the best way forward will help bypass interference and misunderstandings. Create a to-do list. ★★

Birthday Baby: You are wise, heroic and timely. You are candid and compelling.

☺: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☹: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's Answer

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/19

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WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

EAT CRUCIFEROUS TODAY Solution: 11 letters

SALONACOLLARDCF
ESAYOHCKOBULPIE
IOSTATEIDINEERG
GUFROUTEDIBLEPA
GPD RMUSTARDGLOB
ESNDMAETSPAABTB
VIWAKALEERNRRAA
PMEIFALSMPDTULASC
OUTKDYPESSSHSS®
WISOZENOSMTTSA
DNDNRCIERAALIUV
EEEWROLRWCMACMW
RLEEREERBIFAOEAE
EESIBARLHOKHARR
DSE TALONISOCULG

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Bok Choy, Brassica, Brussel, Cabbage, Canola, Chard, Collard, Crops, Daikon, Diet, Edible, Enzymes, Fiber, Field Pepperweed, Fried, Fruit, Garden Cress, Glucosinolates, Green, Grow, Health, Kale, Kohlrabi, Komatsuna, Maca, Meal, Mustard, Peel, Plants, Potassium, Powdered, Raw, Seeds, Selenium, Soups, Steam, Stew, Tatsoi, Turnip, Veggies
Yesterday's Answer: Reference
The NEW Treasury 50 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

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Embiid scores 41, 76ers dominate Clippers in win



LOS ANGELES (AP)—Joel Embiid scored 41 points and the Philadelphia 76ers recovered after blowing a 14-point, first-half lead to beat the Los Angeles Clippers 120-110 on Tuesday night for their third straight win.

Embiid had nine rebounds and made 15 of 18 free throws before leaving the game with 2:53 remaining. Philadelphia fans chanted “MVP! MVP!” as he raised both arms to encourage the cheers.

Tyrese Maxey added 22 points off the bench. Tobias Harris had 20 points as the 76ers closed out a Los Angeles sweep, having edged the Lakers by one point two nights earlier.

After getting outscored 37-27 in the third, the Sixers dominated the fourth. They outscored the Clippers 30-21 in a reversal of the third when LA rallied from 11 points down.

Maxey carried the 76ers early with Embiid resting. He hit three consecutive 3-pointers and had a pair of free throws to extend the 76ers’ lead to 101-93.

The Sixers ran off 11 in a row, including four by Embiid and a 3-pointer by Georges Niang, that extended their lead to 115-98.

Kawhi Leonard scored 27 points to lead the Clippers. Paul George had 13 points and eight rebounds in his return after missing five in a row because of right hamstring soreness. They’ve lost eight of 10.

Leonard and George com-



Philadelphia 76ers guard James Harden (1) and center Joel Embiid (21) high-five after returning to the bench during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Los Angeles Clippers in Los Angeles, Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2023.

bined to score 12 of the Clippers’ first 19 points to open the third. Marcus Morris’ jumper tied the game at 71-all while the Clippers’ defense got stops.

The Clippers took their first lead of the game, 79-78, on Ivica Zubac’s hook over Embiid. On their next possession, Terance Mann scored over Embiid.

Leonard scored four in a row before the 76ers led 90-89 on a pair of free throws by Maxey going into the fourth.

With Embiid and James

Harden on the bench, the Sixers ran off seven straight points to open the second and lead 41-27.

The Clippers rallied to get within five, but Embiid scored 15 points over the final 7:13, capped by a 3-pointer, to keep the Sixers ahead 65-52 at halftime.

Bucks 130, Raptors 122

In Milwaukee, Jrue Holiday scored a season-high 37 points and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Toronto

Raptors 130-122 on Tuesday night.

The Bucks, playing without Giannis Antetokounmpo for the fourth consecutive game, shot 19 for 39 (49%) from 3-point range.

Fred Van Vleet led Toronto with 39 points. Gary Trent Jr. added 28 points and Pascal Siakam had 23.

Play got chippy and action was halted at 6:40 of the fourth quarter with Milwaukee leading 113-110 because of an altercation involving several players near the

Bucks’ basket. Milwaukee’s Brook Lopez was whistled for two technical fouls and ejected. Technicals were also called on Toronto’s O.G. Anunoby and Jamaal Magloire on the play.

Lopez scored 15 of his 19 points in the third quarter before being ejected.

Nuggets 122, Trail Blazers 113

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 36 points as part of his 13th triple-double of the season to offset a 44-point perfor-

mance from Damian Lillard, and Denver won its 14th straight home game by topping Portland.

Jokic, who was 13 of 14 from the floor, finished with 12 rebounds and 10 assists. Michael Porter Jr. had 23 points and Jamal Murray added 17 for Denver.

The Nuggets were without head coach Michael Malone, who missed the game after entering the league’s health and safety protocols. Acting coach David Adelman stepped in and the Western Conference-leading Nuggets didn’t miss a beat.

Lillard had his 214th career game with 30 or more points as the Trail Blazers dropped their eighth straight road game.

Spurs 106, Nets 98

In San Antonio, Keldon Johnson had a career-high 36 points and 11 rebounds and San Antonio snapped a five-game skid with a win over injury slowed Brooklyn.

Jeremy Sochan added 16 point as San Antonio. Johnson was 11 for 26 from the field, including two key baskets in the fourth quarter.

Brooklyn lost its third straight. The Nets have dropped every game since Durant suffered a sprained MCL in his right knee. Irving was a late scratch due to a sore right calf.

Ben Simmons had a triple-double of 10 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists for Brooklyn in the opener of a five-game trip. T.J. Warren added 19 points and Claxton had 15 points, 11 rebounds, four blocks and four assists.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—At a time in life when all but the world’s greatest athletes are slowing down, LeBron James has picked up speed.

James turned 38 years old on Dec. 30, deep in his 20th season in the NBA. He celebrated by scoring 47 points on his birthday in Atlanta, and the second-leading scorer in league history has been on a vintage roll ever since.

James is averaging 37.0 points, 9.7 rebounds and 8.6 assists for the Los Angeles Lakers in his seven games since turning 38. He has three 40-point performances in that stretch, including a season-high 48-point effort in a 140-132 victory over Houston on Monday night.

Older golfers take pride in shooting their age. James is nearly scoring his age against the best basketball players in the world — and even amid everything else James has done to redefine the param-

37.0 at 38: LeBron James goes on scoring tear after birthday

eters of greatness, his current surge is something special.

“He’s just been in an incredible rhythm, and it’s showing,” Lakers coach Darvin Ham said.

James is closing in on Kareem Abdul-Jabbar’s NBA career scoring record while sometimes carrying the short-handed Lakers until Anthony Davis recovers from his latest major injury, and he’s doing it all despite constant reminders of the advancement of time.

With increasing regularity, James is playing against the sons of players he faced earlier in his career, including Rockets youngsters Jabari Smith Jr. and Kenyon Martin Jr. on Monday.

“Hey, you played against my dad your first NBA game ever,” Smith Jr. told James on the court in an exchange captured by NBA TV.

“It made me feel extreme-

ly old when Junior told me that,” James said with a grin. “I think he even said it, like, ‘You probably feel old.’”

Both Smith Sr. and Martin Sr. were in the crowd to watch their sons — and James’ son, 18-year-old Bronny, goes to the same Los Angeles-area high school at which Martin Jr. played. James has also played against one of Bronny’s former high school teammates, Memphis’ Ziaire Williams.

“It’s just a unique thing that I’ve been able to withstand the test of time for as long as I’ve been playing, to be able to compete now versus father-and-son combinations,” James said.

There are concessions to the advances of time, but they’re more about injury than age: James sat out two games since turning 38, both to rest a body with accumulated nicks including a sore

left ankle.

One night before he lit up the Rockets, James scored his 38,000th career point in a 113-112 loss to Philadelphia on Sunday that left James uncharacteristically brusque and frustrated in his post-game interview. He went on Twitter on Monday to voice his disappointment with the officiating in the Lakers’ recent games, calling it “frustrating as hell man.”

James admitted he was “extremely tired” Monday, and he easily could have sat out against the lowly Rockets on the back end of back-to-back games. Instead, he decided he couldn’t take a night off with the Lakers (20-24) on a three-game losing streak and sitting 13th in the 15-team Western Conference without Davis and injured rotation players Lonnie Walker and Austin Reaves.

So James played 36 minutes and scored 20 of his 48 points in the fourth quarter while continuing his career-long history of performing superbly in back-to-back situations.

“Body was sore from the battle that we had (Sunday) versus Philly,” he added. “I guess once I step on the court for warmups and the crowd fills in, it’s my job to go out and play the best way I can.”

James’ scoring spree is yet another reminder his career may not even be close to finished.

The victory over Houston was the 1,400th game of James’ NBA career. That’s the 11th-most in NBA history, and if he stays reasonably healthy, he’ll be within range of Robert Parish’s record of 1,611 games played at about the time his current Lakers contract expires in 2025.

That mark doesn’t include James’ 266 career postseason games, and it’s too early to tell whether he’ll be able to add to that playoff total this spring. The Lakers are outside the playoff picture for the second straight year, a fact that frustrates James tremendously.

Yet when Davis is healthy, the Lakers appear to be a postseason contender. That notion keeps James going, along with the innate fire in a player who has been driven to succeed from his first step onto an NBA court in Sacramento nearly two full decades ago.

“Ever since we made the trade for AD to bring him here, our whole thing was about health,” James said. “That’s not changed. We haven’t had the best luck of health, I would say, especially this year. I can’t tell you what I want out of this ballclub (without good health).”

Novak Djokovic gets warm Australian Open welcome, then



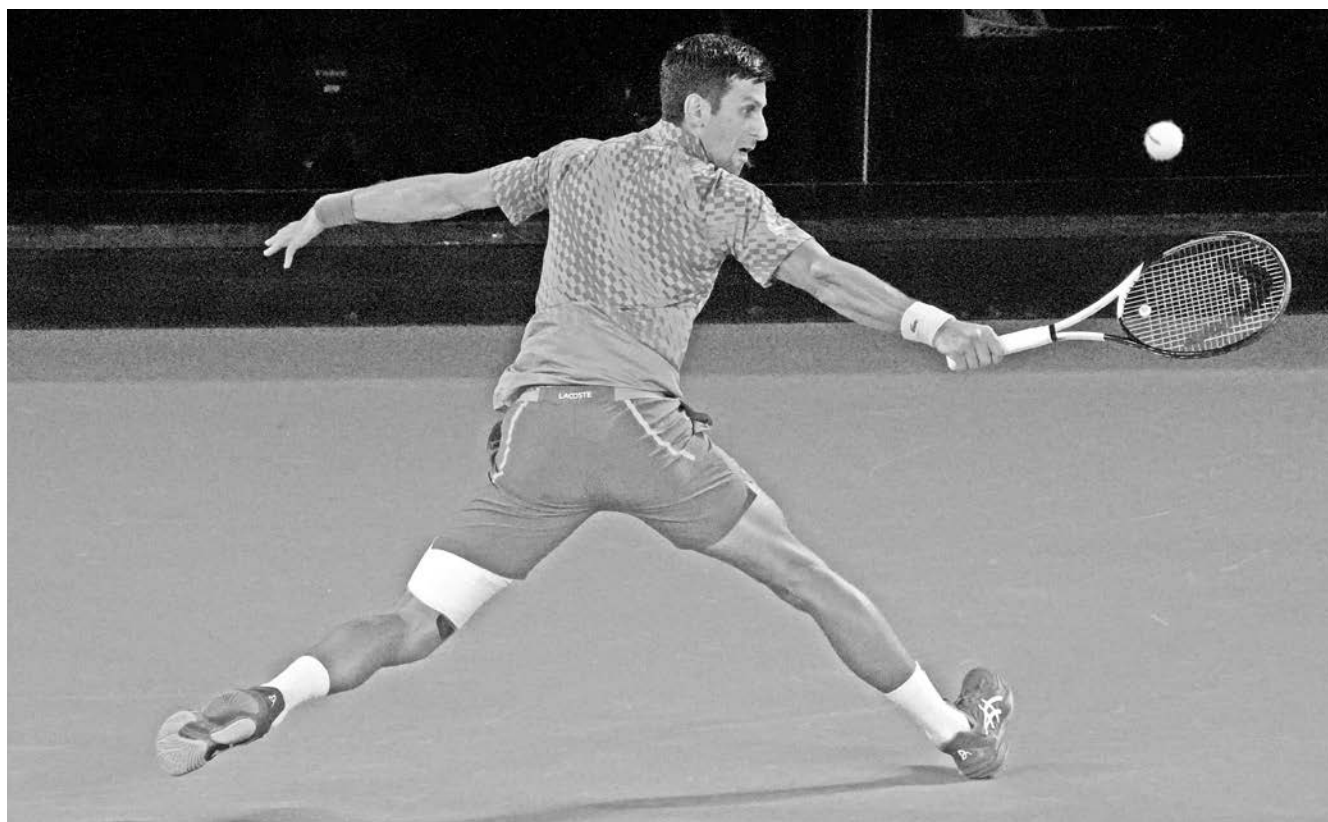
MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—The supportive signs and doz-

ens of Serbian flags and loud chants of Novak Djokovic's nickname filled Rod Laver Arena, providing a warm welcome marking his return to the Australian Open—a tournament he has dominated in the past but one he could not enter a year ago.

Djokovic acknowledged the greeting with a quick wave of his left hand when he stepped out onto the court at 10:30 p.m. Tuesday, then got down to business by playing quite well and only briefly showing a hint of trouble from the balky left hamstring that was heavily taped.

With his parents and brother in the stands at Melbourne Park for the first time since he won his first Grand Slam title there 15 years ago, Djokovic began the first-round match with an ace at 125 mph (201 kph). He held at love there, took control of that set with a 12-point run and was on his way to a 6-3, 6-4, 6-0 victory over 75th-ranked Roberto Carballes Baena that finished after midnight.

"Unbelievable atmosphere. Thank you so much for staying this late, everybody. Also, thank you for giving me such a welcoming and a reception I can only dream of," Djokovic



Novak Djokovic of Serbia plays a backhand return to Roberto Carballes Baena of Spain during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2023. AP

told the crowd in an on-court interview. "I really feel very happy that I'm back in Australia and I'm back here on the court where I had the biggest success in my career."

Djokovic's participation is one of the chief story lines, perhaps the MAIN one, of the first Grand Slam tournament of 2023. That's because Djokovic never got to play a point last season at the site of nine of his major champion-

ships, because his visa was blocked and he was deported from Australia after a legal saga tied to his lack of any vaccination for COVID-19.

He never did get the shots and also missed the U.S. Open because of it. But Australia's government has since relaxed coronavirus-related restrictions, allowing Djokovic to come to the country, and also waived a rule that could have stopped him from getting in

for three years following a visa revocation. He has insisted that whole episode in January 2022 deeply affected him but that he does not hold a grudge; there certainly did not seem to be any hard feelings toward him Tuesday.

Spectators who politely applauded Carballes Baena when he entered the stadium stood and roared for the 35-year-old Djokovic. A sing-song, soccer-style chant of

"Olé, olé, olé, olé!" followed by the two-syllable moniker "Nole!" (pronounced NO-leh) echoed under the arena's closed retractable roof, and would be repeated over and over: during the warmup period; when Djokovic switched sides of the net after the first game; when he was in the midst of climbing out of a love-40 hole in the first set (the only three break points he would face

all night); when he broke to lead 4-3 in the second; etc., etc., etc. There were more of those cheers at the end, and Djokovic smiled broadly.

Grading his play, Djokovic said he found he was "kind of going up and down" in the second set, but didn't give his opponent "too much chance to breathe" in the third. As for his hamstring, Djokovic said he was apprehensive about it going into the match, but afterward this was his assessment: "The leg is good. It's not ideal, but it's getting there."

This was not necessarily Djokovic at his absolute best, and he appeared to show some frustration early on when he kept glaring and muttering in the direction of coach Goran Ivanisevic and the rest of his entourage in the stands. But Djokovic did not necessarily need to be at his absolute best. He certainly produced strong enough tennis to take the initial step toward what he hopes will be a 22nd Grand Slam title to tie rival Rafael Nadal's record for the most in tennis history by a man.

Djokovic, who has spent more weeks at No. 1 in the ATP rankings than anyone, also has a chance to return to that spot after the upcoming two weeks; the person presently occupying that perch, Carlos Alcaraz, is sitting out the Australian Open with a leg injury.

NFL BRIEFS

Warren ready to embrace new challenge as Bears president

LAKE FOREST, Ill. (AP)—Kevin Warren is ready to tackle a new challenge as president and CEO of the Chicago Bears, and he has a big one going from Big Ten commissioner to leading a founding NFL franchise.

A new suburban stadium could be on the horizon. The team owns the No. 1 pick in the draft coming off one of the worst seasons in franchise history.

And he's looking forward to working with general manager Ryan Poles and coach Matt Eberflus.

"It's because of the challenge, the opportunity," Warren said Tuesday at his introductory news conference. "I trust Ryan, I trust Coach Matt that we're going to do things the right way. We're not going to take shortcuts. We're going to build an incredible franchise. I came here to win championships."

He said he's a "big believer in challenges" and wouldn't have wanted the job "if it were easy." He also predicted: "Greatness is ahead of us. All we need to do now is go and

grasp it."

Warren, who replaces the retiring Ted Phillips, is scheduled to start his new job in April, though chairman George McCaskey said that timeframe could be moved up as long as the Big Ten can make "a seamless transition." He also said Phillips has agreed to stay on past his Feb. 28 retirement date "to make sure there's a seamless transition here."

Warren said he's already begun work in his new job. He was hired as Chicago's fifth president and the first from outside the organization last week.

He goes from becoming the first Black commissioner of a Power Five conference to the first Black president of the Bears. He is the team's second president that was not part of the Halas-McCaskey family tree, joining Phillips.

"Papa Bear is smiling today," McCaskey said, referring to his grandfather and team founder George Halas.

Warren's No. 1 task is helping the Bears construct a new enclosed stadium, assuming they finalize the purchase of a 326-acre tract of land in suburban Arlington Heights and decide to move. The Bears hope to close that deal in the

first quarter of this year.

He also is joining an organization with the No. 1 pick in the draft following one of the worst seasons in franchise history. The Bears went 3-14, the most losses ever for "The Monsters of the Midway."

The Bears are going back to their former chain of command, with Poles reporting to Warren. Poles, hired a year ago, had been reporting to McCaskey. But previous general managers were under Phillips.

Poles said he's fine with the arrangement and "fired up" about working with the team's new president.

Warren said becoming an NFL owner is "not necessarily" a goal of his. He also insisted he doesn't see this as a steppingstone to being the league's commissioner.

"There's a lot to be done here," he said. "Last thing I can do is to be looking over the horizon at another job. No. If you talk to anyone like in Minnesota I'm totally in, the Big Ten I'm totally in, I'm totally in with the Bears."

As for leaving the Big Ten? "I just felt it was the right time," he said. "I had done what I was called there to be able to do."

Source: Titans hiring Niners' Ran Carthon as new GM

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—A person familiar with the decision says the Tennessee Titans are hiring San Francisco director of player personnel Ran Carthon as their new general manager, giving the NFL nine minority GMs among the league's 32 franchises.

The Titans interviewed their seventh candidate Tuesday morning in Buffalo senior director of pro scouting Malik Boyd.

The search committee headed by controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk picked Carthon, whose first interview was last Friday, according to the person who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the Titans have not commented on the hiring.

Carthon will be the first minority general manager for the original American Football League franchise founded in 1960 in Houston. He also will be the sixth minority among the past eight GMs hired in the NFL, which has held two programs since late May to promote more minority candidates for front office jobs.

The 49ers will host Dallas on Sunday night in the NFC

divisional round after earning the No. 2 seed.

Carthon joined the Niners as pro personnel director in 2017 and has been director of player personnel the past two years. Carthon also interviewed last year for GM jobs with Chicago and the Giants.

He was a pro scout with Atlanta between 2008-11. He played three years in the NFL as an undrafted rookie with Indianapolis between 2004-06. He played running back in college at Florida. His father, Maurice, both played in the NFL and coached with seven teams.

Source: Browns hire Jim Schwartz as defensive coordinator

CLEVELAND (AP)—Jim Schwartz has never been afraid of big challenges. He's tackling a new one in Cleveland.

Schwartz, who took a winless Detroit team to the playoff in three seasons, has been hired as the Browns' defensive coordinator, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Schwartz spent the past two seasons as a defensive adviser for Tennessee. The

56-year-old was one of four candidates to meet with the Browns, who went 7-10 this season and had defensive issues from the opener. He previously worked with Cleveland general manager Andrew Berry in Philadelphia.

Cleveland's search for a coordinator began last week when coach Kevin Stefanski fired Joe Woods after three seasons.

The Browns also met with Steelers assistant Brian Flores, Seahawks associate head coach Sean Desai and Eagles passing game coordinator Dennard Wilson.

Schwartz was by far the most experienced candidate, and his familiarity with the 4-3 defensive scheme aligns with Cleveland's preference and the club's personnel. Known for a fiery demeanor, Schwartz also will provide some balance to the Browns staff under the even-keeled Stefanski.

Schwartz began his pro career as a scout with Cleveland in the 1990s. He'll take over the Browns' defense once he signs his contract, according to the person who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because that hasn't happened yet.

Ramsay, Elliot are players to beat in open division

By **MARK RABAGO**
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Colin Ramsay and Hye Jin Elliot are the top seeds in the men's and women's open, respectively, of the 2023 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament that will kick off its adult portion of competition this weekend at the American Memorial Park.

Seeded No. 2 in the men's open is CNMI sports hall of famer and national coach Jeff Race, while also entered in the division are Henry Choi, David Kwon, Simon Tang, and June Yu.

For the women's open, Elliot will be joined by sisters Serin and Irin Chung and Hoo Wang.

In the men's 4.0, Nason Wessel is the No. 1 seed with Cody Shimizu and Yutaka

Kadokura the second and third seeds, respectively.

Others entered in the division are Jack Linden, Ian Song, Taher Shakir, Andrew Chung, John Kenneth D. Casauran, Daniel Nam, Min-seong Kim, and Daniel Kang.

In the 3.0 mixed doubles, Sam and Elizabeth Culp are seeded first with Wataru Kadokura and Emma Quan seeded second.

They will be in the company of mixed doubles teams William Lee and Maria Shim, Andrew Chung and Stephanie Kim, Seiyul Hong and Jack Linden, Tiana Cabrera and Jesse Sablan, Maya Shimizu and Dev Bachani, Xavier Lee and Cathy Woo, and John Kenneth D. Casauran

and Jocelyn Paano.

Hye Jin Elliot and Sam Ryu will then be the team to beat in the mixed doubles 5.0. They will be challenged by Serin Chung and David Kwon, Jeff Race and Hoo Wang, and Irin Chung and Cody Shimizu.

Aside from the adult portion of the competition, Week 2 of the 2023 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament will also see organizers conclude juniors play as rain postponed many finals and semifinals matches last weekend.

The Northern Marianas Islands Tennis Association helps coordinate the 2023 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament.



Masters caging enters Final Four phase this Sunday

By **MARK RABAGO**
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

It's losers go home as the semifinals of the masters division of the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League unfurls this Sunday at the Koblerville Basketball Court.

After its slate of open division games were postponed last week on account of flooding, Legends caging down south returns with the bang as No. 1 seed JSN Construction takes on winless and No. 4 seed Legends Elite in the 8am match.

JSN Construction, which

finished the regular season with a 5-1 record, is again expected to lean on Jorge De Guzman, James Abuy, Jun Tabora, Alex Ocampo, and Bernard Montano against Legends Elite.

Legends Elite's thin hopes of an upset rely on Sonny Ebu, Dante Tabora, Ed

Guinto, Ferdie Tobias, and Dick Tibayan. Legends Elite dropped all six games of the eliminations.

The JSN Construction-Legends Elite tussle will be followed by the 9:15am game pitting second seed Blue Haus against third seed Vizion Insurance.

Blue Haus will be backstopped by former national players Ed Diaz and John Santos along with Elmer Esdrelon, Junar Guiab, Bruce Berline, Edwin Santos, and

Richard Peredo.

Vizion Insurance's chances of surprising Blue Haus depends if they get throwback performances from Leo Itaas, Michael Surima, Ariel Baul, Rodney Catalla, Fradel Sedillo, and Dindo Pablo.

Blue Haus actually finished tied with JSN Construction with a similar 5-1 slate, but lost due to an inferior quotient. Vizion Insurance, meanwhile, was 2-4 in the regular season.

After the masters semifinal matches, open division regular season games will follow with JTM Saipan (6-

1) taking on winless Pepoy's Cafe (0-7) in the 10:30am game. It will be followed by the encounter between Vizion Insurance (2-5) and Marianas Health Services (3-4) at 11:45am.

The 1am game will then pit Blue Haus (7-0) against NAPA Auto Parts (4-3), which will then be followed by the 2:15pm clash between Changming Market (6-1) and co-cellar dweller Al-Ger Manpower (0-7). The final game of the day at 3:30pm will then have Pacific Best Choice (3-4) colliding with Padrinos Tuesday Club (4-3).

CAROL

From Page 20

Her secret? Lee said her tennis game has matured to the point that she now has a better read of the opposing player's game plan and adjusts accordingly.

"Consistency and knowing the player's weaknesses

helped me know how to tactically play my opponents. But most importantly not giving up even if I was down mentality helped me win," she said.

Lee dedicated her championship in the PTT \$25K Boca Raton Women tournament to her parents, coaches, and all the "people who have been supporting me."

Carol's father, Dong Min Lee, said they're very proud of her winning again in the U.S. mainland.

"I hope she stays healthy and on the right path. So far so good, I and my family are very happy and proud of Carol."

The PTT \$25K Boca Raton Women tournament is part of the UTR Pro Tennis Tour.

FLYING

From Page 20

The highlight of the year definitely was the "Men's and women's Va'a National Teams performance during the [Pacific] Mini Games, most especially to our women's crew for getting up to the podium," said Andrew.

"Most of our va'a athletes are new to the sport and have not performed at big regional and international events, but they sacrificed a lot and trained hard for one year and competed against the best va'a paddling athletes in the Pacific region—even competed against Tahiti where the sport of outrigger paddling is their national sport," he said.

During the Pacific Mini Games last June, both the men's and women's CNMI National Outrigger Team paddled against the world's best Tahiti, New Caledonia,

and Wallis & Futuna. Even with going up against the big guns, the NMI women's V12 bagged a podium third place finish after Papua New Guinea was disqualified from the race due to a start fault and for finishing outside their designated lane.

In the Micronesia Cup, the Marianas Outrigger Club took home one gold in the women's 1,500m sprint; four silver in the women and men's 500m sprint and men's 1,500m sprint, and one in the 10-mile distance race; and one bronze medal in the women's eight-mile distance race.

In the same event, the Saipan Paddling Club's 16-year-old junior paddler placed fourth out of eight men in the V1 500m sprint, while both SPC's men's V6 teams in the 500m and 1,500m also placed fourth in the finals out of seven teams.

When asked what's next for the NMNPSF after a productive and successful year,

Andrew said "the NMNPSF intends to hold more competitions in 2023 as well as help develop the sports by increasing its membership to include jr. paddlers."

He added, "The NMNPSF also plans to promote a healthy lifestyle via its outrigger programs with its member clubs aimed at those that do not want to train to compete but prefer to paddle as an exercise."

Andrew then said, "It has been an amazing 2022 and we look forward to many exciting things in 2023. The NMNPSF wants to sincerely thank its member clubs for keeping the sport alive and growing—we also want to thank the many supporters from friends to families who tirelessly and very generously support our va'a programs and lastly, want to reach to and to encourage many more to come out and try the sport—join any of the clubs and just give it a try."

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From Page 20

der, Kurt Songsong, Angela Taflinger, Kathleen Tolentino, Raymund Tolentino, Pamela Walsh, Adam Walsh, and Dr. Snyder's dog, Gilligan.

All 38 runners plus man's best friend started their journey on Day 1 in the early morning of Saturday, Jan. 14 from the Kensington to Marpi and back 10K course.

In the late afternoon of Sunday, Jan. 15, Day 2 had them trodding up the Mt. Tapochau 1-way 5K course.

Not 12 hours later, in the early morning of Monday, Jan. 16, they took their weary, jelly-like legs to Day 3's Oleai Beach Road Pathway 5K course, which finally capped off the three-day running event inspired by the three-day Isle of Man Easter Festival of Running in the British Isles.

Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. said after the event that this will not be the first and last time he will put Saipan's runners through a three-day consecutive race. "We're doing this every single year, every

January, every MLK three-day weekend. We're going to try to make this the next jewel race of the Pacific."

Dela Cruz added that for next year's race, the courses will most likely be changed but that he would like to keep the Mt. Tapochau 5K course.

He also said, "Everyone came here with destroyed legs but they did an amazing job to get this done. Not only did the runners do an amazing job, but our race staff volunteers from Northern Marianas Athletics and Run

Saipan did an outstanding job being able to run three back-to-back races as facilitators every day and staying here earlier than the runners and leaving way later than the runners."

He then thanked the sponsors, namely Run Saipan, Saipan International School, the Marianas High School Running Club, volunteers, Kensington Resort and E-Land Group, the Marianas Visitors Authority, Saipan Tribune, Marianas Variety, and KSPN.



Dr. Ron Snyder and his dog, Gilligan, trod up the Mt. Tapochau 5K course on Day 2 of the Inaugural Run Saipan Trinity '23 on Sunday.



Embiid scores 41,
76ers dominate
Clippers in win

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Ramsay, Elliot are
players to beat in
open division

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20 THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Carol Lee wins Florida tourney

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The CNMI's Carol Lee started 2023 on a high note after winning the PTT \$25K Boca Raton Women tournament in Florida last Jan. 7.

The 5'9" junior from Georgia Tech survived three playoff matches that all went through tiebreaking third sets to win the tournament and take home the top purse worth \$3,475.

The 21-year-old first beat Quinn Gleason of the U.S., 4-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-1, in her opening play-off match.

In the semi-finals, the Saipan Community School alumnus defeated Amy Zhu of the U.S., 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (7-6).

She then won it all with an epic 7-6 (6-4), 3-6, 7-5 win over Katerina Stewart, also of the U.S.

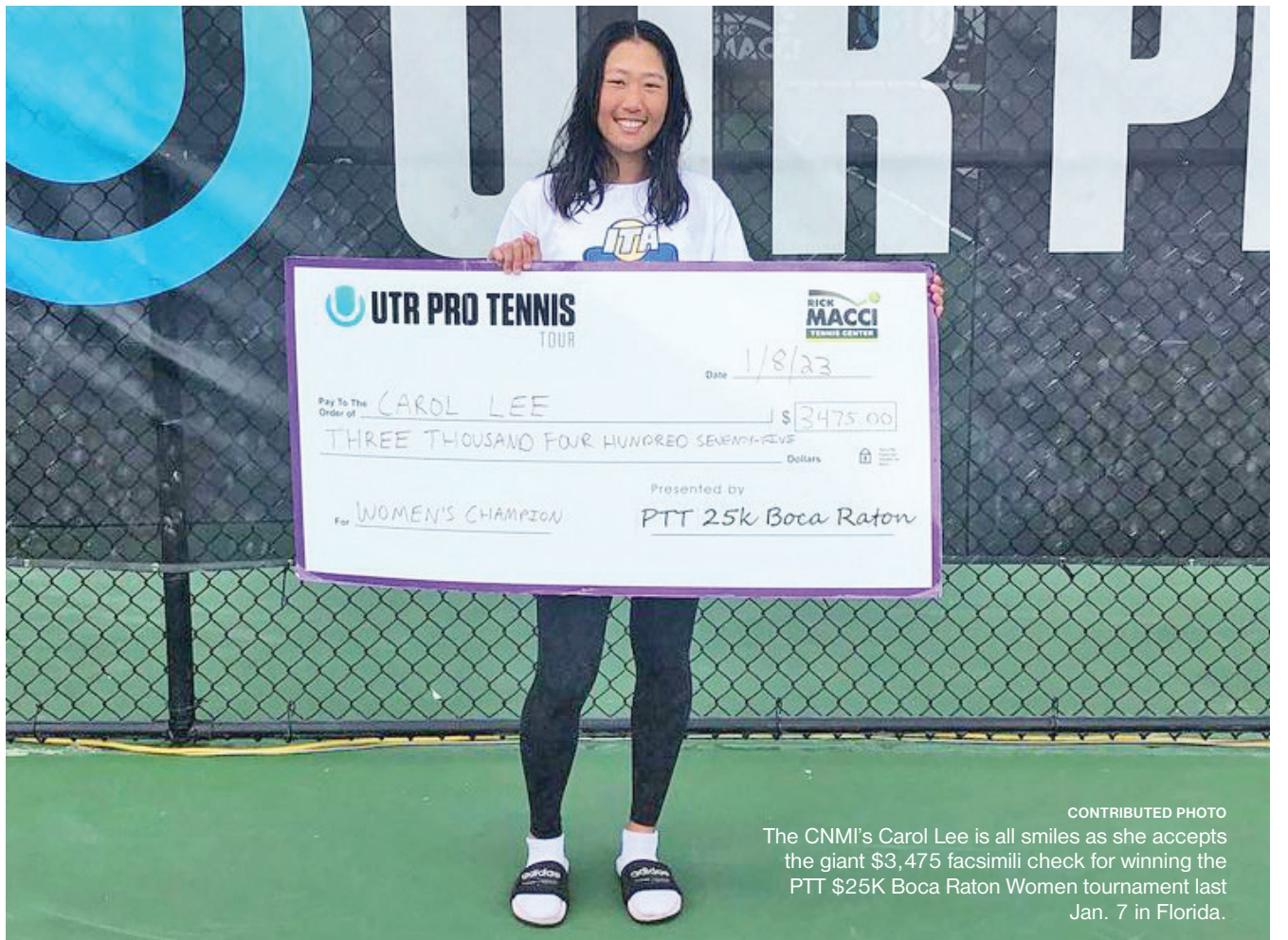
In the preliminaries, Lee debuted with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Xi Wang of China. She then disposed of another

Chinese player, Yuhan Liu, in the second round, 7-5, 6-1, before wrapping up her group assignments unscathed with a 6-1, 7-5 triumph over Akasha Urhobo of the U.S.

The Susupe resident savored her victory in the PTT \$25K Boca Raton Women tourney since she literally had to fight tooth and nail in all three extended playoffs matches.

"The last three matches for the first place playoffs were 3-plus hours long and I won in all three sets, close games. So I felt that I deserved these wins cause I fought for every point and kept pushing further," she said.

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The CNMI's Carol Lee is all smiles as she accepts the giant \$3,475 facsimili check for winning the PTT \$25K Boca Raton Women tournament last Jan. 7 in Florida.

Flying colors for CNMI va'a in 2022



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Some members of the CNMI Va'a Women's National Team pose for a photo during the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last June.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER



Exceptional work out in the crystal clear waters of the Philippine Sea for CNMI paddlers in 2022 made the Northern Marianas National Paddle Sports Federation president Justin Andrew rate the year a perfect 10/10.

According to Andrew, the va'a community successfully organized and conducted the Public School System-NMNPSF Interscholastic Outrigger Race program, performed well during the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last June, and performed extremely well during the 22nd Micronesia Cup Canoe Race in Palau last October.

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38 runners, 1 dog, 3 races

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

It was one for the books as 38 of Saipan's most daring runners—along with one dog—took on the ultimate, leg-destroying, and lung-busting, challenge of running three

consecutive races in the Inaugural Run Saipan Trinity '23 during the three-day Martin Luther King Jr. weekend that spanned a total of 20K through Saipan's most scenic routes.

The participants of the inaugural race along with the Top 6 overall runners Chad Tafling-

er, An Bang, Joel Bucu, Rosemarie Chisato, Chong Nam Lee, and Terra Allen, were James Abuy, Margarita Santos Bamba, Jeane Bracken, Marilou Carlos, Kim Church, Elizabeth Church, Hernando Cristobal, Stephen Dame, Megan Dame, Edward Dela Cruz Jr.,



Floro Derexes, Juanita Fajardo, Jay Anne Felipe, Vhoie Francia, Matthew Furan,

Marjorie Ganacias, Loremel Hocog, Sheila Mabutas, Simon Necesito, Jessica Ortizo, Aaron Paul Pamintuan, Theo Rodgers, Kathy Ruszala, Joseph Mundo Santos, Maria Sablan Santos, Dr. Ron Sny-

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A total of 38 runners and one dog who joined the Inaugural Run Saipan Trinity '23 pose for a group photo after the conclusion of the race series on Day 3 at the Oleai Beach Road Pathway Monday morning.